

Rolling Stone



Issue 767 October 2015
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**Dr. Dre
& Ice Cube**

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TELL ALL

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GROHL'S
NEW SIDE
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MY LIFE
IN 15 SONGS

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WHY PINK
FLOYD IS
OVER

**YEMEN'S
HIDDEN
WAR**

Chvrches

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RS767

"ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS"

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ON THE COVER Chris Cornell photographed by **Jeff Lipsky**.

Dr. Dre (left) and Ice Cube photographed at Smashbox Studios, Culver City, California, July 14th, 2015. Page 58

MARK SELIGER



CORRESPONDENCE

LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE



Grace Under Fire

AFTER READING YOUR story on the making of *Grace* I dug it out after not hearing it for 10 or so years, and I have to say it sounds a little dated! Of course there are some classic tracks on there, but "Eternal Life" sounds a bit like Nineties jock rock. Just sayin'...

Kate Swann,
Coffs Harbour, NSW

THANKS SO MUCH FOR JEFF Apter's story on *Grace*. There was so much detail there for a die-hard fan like myself. I never understood why so much of the album was cover versions until I read that he was discovered playing covers in coffee shops. It makes perfect sense that his debut should be a showcase for his perfect interpretations.

Paul Weiss,
Melbourne, Vic

Suge Rush

THE STORY ON SUGE KNIGHT was epic [RS 766]! That had to be one of the best stories on hip-hop you've ever published. Knight is a straight-up gangsta! The part about him shaking down out-of-town rappers who wanted to play shows in Los Angeles for "taxes" was classic. Much better than the story on rock dinosaurs Rush. Who even cares about those sad, irrelevant old tools?

Brendan Hill,
Dubbo, NSW

Kim? WTF?

I READ AN INTERVIEW with your publisher saying you wouldn't be putting Kim Kardashian on the cover of the Aussie issue, but it still got a run inside! [RS 766] Can we expect an apology soon? I don't think the Kardashians have any place in a credible magazine like ROLLING STONE. That whole vapid, brain-dead family's inexplicable fame signals the coming of the end of the world.

Melinda Davis,
Earlwood, NSW

"The whole Kardashian family's inexplicable fame signals the coming of the end of the world."

Judd's All Right

JONAH WEINER'S INTERVIEW with Judd Apatow [RS 766] gave me newfound respect for a man who I previously admired as a director. Now I see him as somebody who is pushing the boundaries and actually doing something to make sure we're seeing comedy made by different people like Lena Dunham and Amy Schumer, not just the same bunch of middle-aged men. Keep up the good work, Judd.

Brian Herbert,
Hawthorne, QLD

Flight Risk?

SURELY IN THIS AGE OF heightened airport security and terror threats, a guy like Ben Schlappig ["Up In the Air" - RS 766] would set alarm bells ringing when he travels through Customs. If he travels randomly and perpetually like he claims to, his passport must look way too suspicious, so why are they letting him into the U.S. so easily when I get the stink-eye for having long hair?

Chris Boyle,
Coberg, Vic

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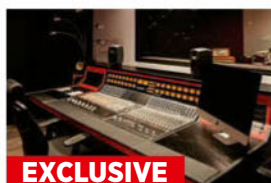
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EXCLUSIVE

 **ABBNEY ROAD
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FIRST LOOK**

We chat to the founders of the iconic studio's new educational initiative, which launches in Melbourne and Sydney later this year.



LIST

 **100 GREATEST
SONGWRITERS
OF ALL TIME
THE RS LIST**

From Brill Building tunesmiths to punk poets, from Woody Guthrie to Max Martin, the visionaries who defined music history.



Mac DeMarco

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Spotify



"Some people think *Sgt. Pepper's* is a genius album, but I think it's a mishmash of rubbish." —Keith Richards

Random Notes



U2 and Bruce's New York Serenade

During their eight-show stand at Madison Square Garden, U2 brought out everyone from Jimmy Fallon to Lady Gaga to the Roots. But they saved the best surprise guest for their final show, when Bruce Springsteen joined the band for "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For". "He gave us a reason to be a band," Bono said. "Gave us a level we could never reach but always aspire to." Also on hand (but not onstage) were Bill and Hillary Clinton. "Trying to figure out for the life of me why the Clintons are sitting in the nose nose nose bleed section," tweeted Questlove, who was watching from the floor.



"I've found my running mate!" Hillary cried as she spotted the Edge.



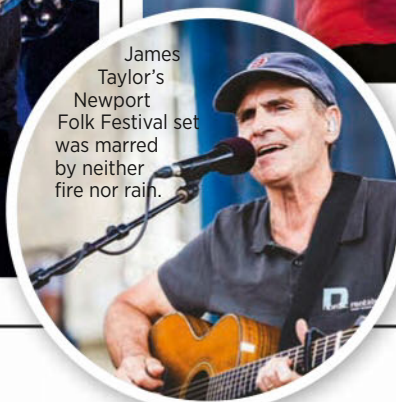
Charli XCX played an intense set at Lollapalooza, culminating with a bombastic "Boom Clap".



MCCARTNEY SHAKES LOLLA For the encore of his headlining performance at Lollapalooza in Chicago, Paul McCartney brought out Alabama Shakes' Brittany Howard for a rousing version of "Get Back". "Once in a lifetime!" says Howard. "I hope they had as much fun as I did."



James Taylor's Newport Folk Festival set was marred by neither fire nor rain.



LET IT BLEED Courtney Barnett played through a finger injury at Newport. "I was trying my best not to bleed everywhere," she says.

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Rock & Roll



WHEN CHVRCHES came off the road last November, bringing to an end the touring cycle for their 2013 debut *The Bones Of What You Believe*, they'd played 364 shows over two years. No wonder frontwoman Lauren Mayberry says they were "definitely ready to go off grid for a little bit". By January, however, the creative juices were flowing and the Scottish trio gathered at Alucard Studios – the three-bedroom flat in Glasgow they converted into a studio, where they also recorded their [Cont. on 14]

Chvrches' Second Coming

The Scottish trio return with 'Every Open Eye'
By Rod Yates

ON THE ROAD AGAIN Chvrches' Lauren Mayberry performing in Canada on July 15th.

MARK HORTON/WIREIMAGE

CHVRCHES

[Cont. from 13] debut – and set about writing the follow-up. Despite the fact *The Bones Of What You Believe* had propelled the band – also featuring Martin Doherty and Iain Cook – into the Top 20 in the UK, U.S. and Australia and established them as a bona fide live draw, the sessions weren't as fraught as you might imagine. "Weirdly we didn't really talk about the album in advance a huge amount," says Mayberry. "We had some conversations toward the end of the touring, and had a vague idea that we wanted to do something that felt like album one, same kind of vibe, but more distilled and less overly complicated in the arrangements. Beyond that we didn't really set ourselves a brief."

The band chose to self-produce at Alucard – it's Dracula backwards: "That was Iain's idea," says Mayberry – in an attempt to gain some normality after the events of the previous two years. "It just made sense to go back to where we'd done the first one and have that sense of distance [from the industry]. And the first to second album is quite a transitional time for anyone in a band, and it's quite important from our point of view to have figured out what we want the band to be at this point and trust our gut instincts."

The result, *Every Open Eye* (released September 25th), will feel familiar to anyone who fell under the spell of the band's debut, albeit with the minor tweaks the band envisaged. The juxtaposition between sombre melodies and synth-heavy dance beats remains, and while Mayberry's lyrics, a highlight of Chvrches' debut, are as defiant as ever – "You talk far too much for someone so unkind," she sings on first single "Leave a Trace" – she won't be drawn on any themes. Instead she'll admit only that "there are songs about situations which haven't been good, but there are lyrics on there that are about experiences which have been great."

All that's left now, then, is to play another 364 shows. Chvrches' last world tour taught them plenty, not least that the show must go on. "We've definitely had days where people have been puking and shitting right up until we go onstage, and you just have to hang on to the microphone stand or keyboard stand for dear life for an hour and 20 minutes until you can get back offstage and puke some more," chuckles Mayberry. "But it's entertainment, it's showbiz, so people don't need to know these things. You've got to keep the puke to yourself!"



The Snowdroppers Get Down to Business

Blues-rockin' Sydneysiders return with a fiery LP and a no-nonsense attitude

FANS AND CRITICS EMBRACED the Snowdroppers' punchy second album, *Moving Out Of Eden*, but according to lead singer Jeremy Davidson, recording and promoting the LP was a demoralising experience. "We didn't know what we wanted it to sound like," he says of the 2013 release. "Everything about that record was quite rushed. We just had to release something."

It had taken Davidson and co. several years to extricate themselves from a contract with the record label that released their first album, *Too Late to Pray*. That contract made it practically impossible for the Snowdroppers to earn revenue from their recorded music, according to the singer. By the time the band had signed with a new label, "we had kind of lost momentum", he admits.

The decision was made to record a big-budget follow-up with an overseas producer, and to do it quickly. The Snowdroppers felt conflicted, and toured less heavily than before. Determined not to make the same mistake twice, the band decided album number three would be a

bare-bones affair. "This time we went in with a clearer purpose," says Davidson: "to get something that was more indicative of what we were about live."

The quartet enlisted Ryan Hazell, their long-time sound guy, to capture their essence. "He's been our live engineer for many years," Davidson explains, "so he knew what we sounded like as players. But he also knew us as people."

The resulting album, *Business*, is more forthright than its predecessors, with a spontaneous vibe and what Davidson describes as a "mid-fi" aesthetic. "It's the closest we've come to a true representation of our live sound," he says.

It's also the Snowdroppers' most diverse collection of songs to date, incorporating pop hooks, country twang and classic R&B. "I think in any kind of creative endeavour, especially a band, when you stagnate, you die," Davidson explains. "You need to be constantly moving towards something."

A national tour is under way, and the band is eyeing international dates in 2016. This time, Davidson says he is determined to proceed on his own terms. "We did a lot of growing up between the second record and this one," he says. "In the past, we jumped through the hoops. We made decisions to please our labels. Now, we [don't] give a shit about that."

DAN F. STAPLETON

"In the past we jumped through hoops. Now we don't."



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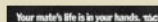
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Gary Clark Jr.'s Texas Medicine

How the blues guitarist returned home to Austin and made a fiery new album

GARY CLARK JR.'S 2012 MAJOR-label debut, *Blak and Blu*, was one of the most acclaimed blues albums in recent memory. Recording in Los Angeles with pop and rock producers Mike Elizondo (Dr. Dre, Fiona Apple) and Rob Cavallo (Green Day), the singer-guitarist fused classic influences like Willie Dixon and Albert King with a love for Nirvana and hip-hop, yanking traditional American music into the present.

For his new album, *The Story of Sonny Boy Slim*, the 30-year-old Clark brought it all back home, recording in his native Austin in search of a more relaxed, familiar vibe. "I went in feeling vulnerable – I was very aware of the sophomore slump," says Clark. "I really wanted to just come home and be in the studio, hang out and go back to my house."

While *Blak and Blu* has a slick, L.A. feel, *Sonny Boy Slim* is pure Austin soul. Starting in March of last year, Clark headed into Austin's Arlyn Studios with little more than ideas and grooves, self-producing the album with his live engineer Bharath "Cheex" Ramanath and Arlyn's chief engineer, Jacob Sciba. "These guys," says Clark, referring to Sciba and fellow engineer Joseph Holguin, "put in a lot of



HOME COMING
Clark at Arlyn
Studios in Austin

hard work to let me be in this room and let loose."

Sessions would often take place late at night and sometimes continue past daybreak, fuelled by beloved Arlyn co-owner Lisa Fletcher's combination of locally made vodka and fresh-squeezed

grapefruit juice. Sciba grins and lifts a glass: "You want to know how we made this album?" he says. "This right here." "I would come in the morning," says Fletcher, "they would still be at it."

The music that emerged ranges from the screaming "Grinder" (about a financially strapped family) to the stomping funk of the Prince-like "Star" to the acoustic gospel "Church". The album title, *The Story of Sonny Boy Slim*, seems to suggest a biographical element, but Clark says the album is driven more by a feeling than a concept: "The only real theme is, 'Through all the bullshit, there's always hope.' That's kinda it."

Clark recently had a son, Zion, with his partner, fashion model Nicole Trunfio. Earlier this year, he debuted material from *The Story of Sonny Boy Slim* at Bonna-

roo, and he'll soon be hitting the road with his longtime touring band, which also played on the album. "I really just wanted to put everything together and be 1,000 per cent who I am," Clark says of the finished product. "This album is exactly what that is: loud."

JOE GROSS

ACTIVISM

A Teenage Climate Warrior

Meet the 15-year-old hip-hop artist impacting the environmental debate

COLORADO-RAISED ECO-ACTIVIST and rapper Xiuhtezcatl Martinez is only 15 years old, but he's already a leading voice in the environmental movement. In June, Martinez stunned representatives of nearly 200 countries when he delivered an impassioned climate-change address at the U.N., and he'll soon appear in a short film being produced by Al Gore's Climate Reality Project. Last month, his band Earth Guardians (which also includes his 12-year-old brother, Itzcuahtli) performed a

main-stage set at the politically charged Arise festival in Colorado. "We don't just get recognition because we're young," Martinez says. "We get recognition because we bring a unique conscious hip-hop to the stage that people aren't seeing anywhere else."

Martinez enjoys the attention his music is getting. But he's also young enough to know his entire generation is at risk if his message doesn't make a difference. "This isn't about the future," he says. "The crisis is here." COCO MCPHERSON



Martinez

GET READY FOR 5SOS MANIA

Last year, Sydney pop-punk band 5 Seconds of Summer released a chart-topping debut and opened for One Direction. They celebrated their success by getting right back into the studio: In January, they moved into a house in L.A. and brought in members of their favorite bands – Good Charlotte, Goldfinger and Sum 41 – to help write and produce an upcoming LP (tentatively due this year). Get ready for an all-out 5SOS blitz: They're headlining amphitheaters and arenas in America right now, and their label expects them to only get huger. "I think they absolutely have One Direction potential," says Capitol Records' Mitra Darab. BRITTANY SPANOS



Luke Hemmings

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Tom Petty Kick-Starts Mudcrutch Once More

Singer cuts new album with his pre-Heartbreakers crew and opens up his vault

IT'S BEEN SEVEN YEARS SINCE TOM Petty reassembled Mudcrutch, the short-lived band he formed in the early Seventies, years before finding fame with the Heartbreakers. Mudcrutch's self-titled 2008 debut ranks among Petty's best recent work. Now, he's readying a second Mudcrutch set. "I've spent the last month frantically working on material,"

then moved to Los Angeles, where it broke up in 1975 after releasing just one single.

"It's a totally different thing than the Heartbreakers," says Petty. "It's a different rhythm section and a different style of music. I play bass, which is a lot of fun for me, since I started out as a bass player. And Tommy is just out of sight on guitar. We spent our teenage years singing together, so we have a good blend."

The first Mudcrutch album was recorded in only two weeks. The group plans a similar straight-ahead process when it reconvenes in a Los Angeles studio later this year to hammer out new material. Mudcrutch played a handful of successful California club dates in 2008, but this time out Petty hopes they'll tour more extensively.

"I'd love to get to the East Coast with it, too," he says. "Last time, we were under the gun because we had a big Heartbreakers tour coming up. Right now, I'm just writing, and I need to change my mindset from the Heartbreakers to that kind of music."

Petty thrilled fans two years ago when he played a series of theatre shows in New York and Los Angeles packed with rarities and covers. "It changed my whole way of thinking about playing live," he says. "I'd love to do more theatre shows, but it's complicated business-wise. I don't know for sure, but I would bet it costs us money. But I loved the freedom of it."

Also in the works is an album built around material Petty recorded for 1994's *Wildflowers*, the Rick Rubin-produced solo disc that remains one of his most beloved LPs. "It's not really a box set," he says of the release. "We have the second album of the double album that was originally made. We're going to put it out as its own album. It's sitting there finished. I'm just waiting to hear when they're gonna put it out."

In the meantime, Petty has no intention of recording another solo album in the foreseeable future. "There's nobody I'm longing to play with besides the Heartbreakers," he says, "so I just don't see the point of a solo record."

ANDY GREENE



BIG MUDDY
Petty onstage
in 2014

Petty says, noting he has four songs that he's happy with. "The good thing about Mudcrutch is that everyone brings in a song, so I don't have to write 12 or something. Following up the last one is intimidating because I think that's one of the better albums I was ever involved with."

Mudcrutch originally featured drummer Randall Marsh and rhythm guitarist Tom Leadon (brother of founding Eagles guitarist Bernie Leadon) alongside two future Heartbreakers, guitarist Mike Campbell and keyboard player Benmont Tench. The band first got together in 1970 in Petty's hometown of Gainesville, Florida,



POWLEY

SEX, DRUGS AND A BREAK-OUT STAR

How 'Diary of a Teenage Girl' made Bel Powley into a Hollywood It girl

British actress Bel Powley has appeared onscreen and onstage for a decade. But the 23-year-old's role in the widely acclaimed film *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* involved a "scary" first – a series of sex scenes with co-star Alexander Skarsgård. "I'd never even had an onscreen kiss before," she says, "let alone an onscreen shag. I was like, 'This is the worst idea in the world!'" By the time the film was finished, she'd shot eight of them – "including the lesbian sex scene".

In *Diary*, Powley stars as Minnie, a 15-year-old in 1970s San Francisco who worships Iggy Pop, drops acid and just happens to be sleeping with her mum's boyfriend. The film premiered at Sundance in January, earning a jury award and making Powley the It girl of the festival circuit.

At 13, she starred in *M.I. High*, a popular U.K. kids show, but she didn't see herself pursuing an acting career. That changed at 16, when playwright Polly Stenham cast her in a play at London's Royal Court Theatre. "It opened my eyes to all these strong women in this industry," Powley says.

She was especially drawn to *Diary*'s matter-of-fact take on teenage sexuality. "There's no moral story coming away from it," says Powley, who has four more features in the works, including *Ashes in the Snow*, a World War II drama based on Ruta Sepetys' bestselling novel. "There's no life lesson to it. I desperately wanted to be part of that."

ELISABETH GARBER-PAUL



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How the Foos Saved Their Summer

Dave Grohl on overcoming a devastating leg injury – and rethinking ‘Sonic Highways’

By Kory Grow

DAVE GROHL WAS LOST IN A fog. It was mid-June, a few days after he had toppled off a 12-foot-tall platform during a Foo Fighters gig in Sweden, breaking his right fibula and dislocating his ankle. The damage was significant, requiring surgery and six metal screws in his leg. “A physical therapist told me it was like my ankle got into a 40-mile-per-hour car crash,” Grohl says. “It’s like my ankle got its ass kicked by Ronda Rousey.” Worst of all, the Foos had to cancel the rest of their European tour, seven dates in all. Their North American tour – including a 20th-anniversary concert in Washington, D.C., on July 4th – was in jeopardy as well.

Now, as he sat in an OxyContin-induced haze in London, Grohl had a mystic vision that saved the Foos’ summer plans. Reaching for a stack of hotel stationery, he sketched a “ridiculous, primitive drawing” of a fantastical, guitar-adorned throne that would allow him to prop up his bum leg in concert, and he had Foo Fighters’ lighting guy build it. “When I saw that thing, I just fucking cracked up,” Grohl says, laughing. “It was exactly what I wanted it to be – and it worked!”

Thanks to the throne, Grohl was onstage for the July 4th show – and for every Foos gig since. For a guy who’s used to prowling the stage, sitting down for an entire show has been a challenge. “I’ve got my leg up on that thing, but the rest of my body is like fucking Joe Cocker up there,” he says. “It’s insane.” Grohl has been opening shows by playing the riff to “Everlong” from behind a giant curtain, which pulls away to reveal him sitting, leg outstretched, to the elated laughter of fans. At the Foos’ gig at Boston’s Fenway Park, Grohl brought out his orthopedic surgeon to help the band cover the White Stripes’ “Seven Nation Army”. Grohl says the outpouring of support from fans has been overwhelming: Every night when he takes the stage, he looks out and is met by crowds of people wearing T-shirts emblazoned with an X-ray of his broken leg. “It’s really weird,” he says.

The Foo Fighters tour runs into November, with some short breaks, but the band is already beginning to focus on the second season of its HBO series, *Sonic Highways*. Grohl hints that the premise of the



SOLDIER ON
Grohl at the Anish
Valley Rock
Festival in South
Korea on July 26th

show – the Foos travel to different cities and write and record with local heroes – might get tweaked this time around. “I have a pretty good idea of what I’d like to do,” Grohl says. “It doesn’t always have to be the Foo Fighters. It doesn’t always have to be America. I’ve already contacted a ton of musicians to see if they’d be interested in being involved, and every single one of them said yes.”

In the meantime, Grohl can celebrate the debut album from Teenage Time Killers, an all-star punk band featuring Grohl as well as current and former members of Slipknot, Fear, Dead Kennedys, Lamb of God, Minor Threat, the Germs and Alkaline Trio, among others. The group was spearheaded by Reed Mullin, drummer for hardcore-metal vets Corrosion of Conformity, a longtime friend of Grohl. “Reed was my drumming hero when I was 15

or 16,” he says. “I’ve stolen so many of his drum riffs from COC’s *Animosity* over the years.”

Grohl assumes an unlikely role in Teenage Time Killers: bassist. The group simply asked the Foo singer if he wanted to play the four-string on a number of songs. “It’s probably my favourite instrument to play standing up,” Grohl says. He handles bass on 11 of the 20 songs on the group’s newly released debut, *Greatest Hits Vol. 1*. “I knocked out my parts in a day or two, and it was so much fun,” says Grohl. “It was like hardcore karaoke with a bass.”

Mullin is also organising a Teenage Time Killers concert in L.A., to take place with as many of the album’s participants as possible – including Grohl. “Oh, my God, I need to learn those fucking songs again,” Grohl says about the prospect. “Those are hard.”

FOALS

WHAT WENT DOWN

O U T N O W



Jeff Tweedy

On anarchy at the dinner table, touring with Dylan, and why the hell he named Wilco's album 'Star Wars' By Patrick Doyle

ON JULY 16TH, WILCO SHOCKED THEIR fans in the best way possible: by releasing *Star Wars*, the band's first album in four years, for free on its website, with no advance warning. The album is Wilco's best in at least a decade, full of loose, poppy rockers like "Random Name Generator" and "The Joke Explained". Frontman Jeff Tweedy credits a tiny five-watt Fender Champ amp as his muse: "It just sounds like the biggest fuzzbox on Earth – those sounds reminded me of glam rock and T. Rex," he says. "I adore that stuff, but I always thought I wasn't androgynous enough to pull it off, you know?" After recording the basic tracks himself in the Wilco loft in Chicago, Tweedy brought in the other members of the band separately to play on them. The process has proved so productive that Tweedy says he's already halfway finished with the next Wilco album. "I have a whole lot of material," he says. "[The next album] is very different."

First off, your new album is called *Star Wars* and there's a cat on the cover. Please explain.

That painting of that cat hangs in the kitchen at the [Wilco] loft, and every day I'd look at it and go, "You know, that should just be the album cover." Then I started thinking about the phrase "Star Wars" recontextualised against that painting – it was beautiful and jarring. The album has nothing to do with *Star Wars*. It just makes me feel good.

Are you even a *Star Wars* fan?

No! In fact, I didn't know there was a new *Star Wars* movie coming out until my lawyer told me. Everybody advised me against it, because there is a heavily protected trademark involved.

Why did you decide to surprise-release the album?

I was really dreading the modern roll-out pattern. Usually, by the time the record comes out, I hate it. I hate talking about it. I hate all the people that have weighed in on it. I think it's done a disservice to our records, the way they've been heard in dribs and drabs, and a lot of people think they've heard a whole record

after just hearing one song. That's not the way Wilco records work.

You've been through a lot in the past few years – your brother died in 2013, and your wife was diagnosed with cancer last year. How did that affect your songwriting?

I certainly have been very prolific in the past few years, and it could be for a couple of reasons, [including] my wife's cancer diagnoses. She's doing great now. It provided maybe a deeper need for the distractions that I've learned how to use helpfully in my life. Like, no matter what condition I was in with addiction or anything, music has been a healthy adaptation in the face of some kind of maladaptation. But there's also something more practical than that, which is that I've been home a lot more than before, and in between chemo sessions and taking my wife to radiation and her recovering from the surgery, I've been walking to the loft, making something for a little bit every day.

Wilco toured with Bob Dylan in 2013.

What's your relationship with Bob like?

We've talked a little bit, and I actually get a really warm feeling from him.

I felt very inspired just being in the presence of somebody that has that few fucks to give about anything. There's a lot of middle ground there between somebody like Bob Dylan and Paul McCartney, who totally gives it up every night for the people and the songs. But if I had to choose one to be more inspired by, it's definitely on the more curmudgeonly-asshole side of the spectrum.

Along those lines, you've been portrayed as intense and sometimes controlling, particularly in the 2002 documentary *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart*.

I haven't watched it since it came out, but I've stumbled upon a YouTube clip of me arguing with Jay Bennett. I don't see myself as an asshole, but surely some people do. I'm more comfortable in my skin at this point in my life.

Do you have any hobbies?

Lately my hobby is arguing with my 15-year-old son about anarchism. I'm a little bit less inclined than him to foresee a viable future with widespread implementation [of anarchy]. Those are the kinds of awful and nerdy arguments we have around the dinner table, and, yes, you're lucky you aren't eating dinner with us.



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EXPERT
OPINION

Gene Simmons

We asked the Kiss co-founder – who joined the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with the band last year – to tell us what he thinks of five songs.

OLD

Patti Smith
“Free Money”

This is actually one of the better-written songs on *Horses*. Patti sounds plaintive, and then she spits out the lyrics, which she does better than almost anyone.

The Kinks
“Dedicated Follower of Fashion”

One of my all-time favourite bands. I wish more modern bands listened to and absorbed the Kinks.

The Bee Gees
“I Started a Joke”

The pre-disco-era Bee Gees wrote and recorded some of the great pop songs, almost on a Beatles level, like this Robin Gibb lead vocal.

NEW

Kendrick Lamar
“For Free?”

Hilarious. “This dick ain’t free,” Lamar says. Indeed! Lesson well learned.

Lamb of God
“512”

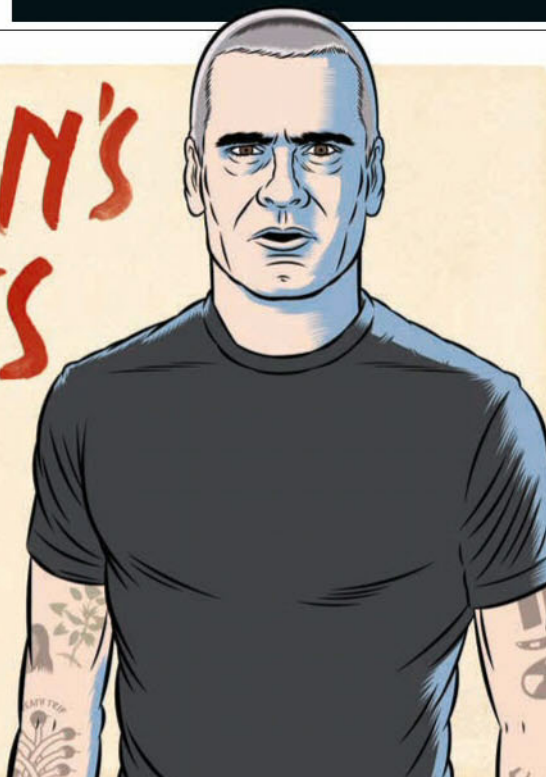
While I like the backing track here, I must confess this type of vocal styling – what would happen if a werewolf tried singing? – just ain’t my thing. Not that I’m claiming I can sing, mind you.



A FAN'S NOTES

BY HENRY
ROLLINS

Our man in the van confronts the enemy: fear.



MY FATHER WAS A SMART man. He held a Ph.D. in economics, I believe. He was, however, remarkably timid and in many ways led a life un-lived, unexamined. He did not travel abroad and had some incredible ideas about nonwhites, women and homosexuals. There was an anger that was easily detectable, but as I grew older I saw that it was more than that. It was fear. He was full of it. He absorbed, manufactured and radiated it at all times. It never rubbed off on me and as an adult, I began to understand why a man who was so intelligent was unable to surmount such a low hurdle. Fear is powerful.

Fear, if you're infected with it, can influence almost everything you do. Even the most banal exchanges, low impact decisions or slightest movements can be perverted by the smallest amount of fear you carry.

America, as you are probably well aware, has one of the bloodiest and unenviable histories of any country you can think of. For such a young nation, there has been enough brutality, inequality, bloodlust and misery for a country centuries its elder. From that, there is a lot of anger, upset and countless forces at work that shape American society going forward.

America is an angry nation. It is also up to its collective eyeballs in fear. Two men want to get married and thus de-

stroy Christianity. “Other” people want to come to America for myriad reasons – but mainly to kill Americans. Cops want only to kill unarmed African-American men, who only want to steal, rape and kill white families. Hispanic people are only in America to live tax free and commit crime. I’m sure I left out a few hundred other examples. Two things are for sure: facts are facts and fear, while quite real, is manufactured in the mind of the less than informed.

You’ll never know until you go. This is one of the codes I live by. Remember George W. Bush? He told me that the world was full of “evil doers”, which made the coffee I was drinking shoot out of both nostrils, considering the amount of mayhem he was responsible for. There were countries he warned me about. It took a while, but I got to every one of them. I’m still here.

I am presently in the 86th country I have visited. Ecuador. I am full of fear! Fear that I will face plant on one of the sidewalks here in beautiful Quito – a city whacked into the side of the Andes! Walking the streets here will turn you into a damn mountain goat. My knees are begging me to stop. The people are like the ones I have met all over the world – like the ones I have met in Australia. Friendly, helpful, extraordinary.

America bought into fear and is paralysed by it. Learn from the example. Don’t fall for it.

“America bought into fear and is paralysed by it.”

DAVID GILMOUR

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CHECKING IN



BOB AND ME
Dylan and
Campbell
onstage
in 2002

Life With Dylan

Larry Campbell on his new LP and touring with a legend

LARRY CAMPBELL HAS BEEN ON-stage for some of the greatest rock & roll moments of the past 30 years, as Bob Dylan's sideman from 1997 to 2004 and as Levon Helm's bandleader and co-writer during the drummer's late-career comeback. Now, Campbell is stepping into the spotlight, along with his wife, Teresa Williams. The couple's new self-titled debut highlights Campbell's endearingly raw tenor and Williams' Tennessee tent-revival-trained howl and includes a cover of the Louvin Brothers' "You're Running Wild", featuring a lost drum track by Helm. "After years of being mostly apart in our marriage, suddenly we're working together all the time," says Williams.

Helm, according to Campbell, "was incapable of being inauthentic". Dylan was a different story. "Mercurial," says Campbell. "It's in all the books about him, and it's all true." Dylan had the band listen to Dead bootlegs as an example of how to cover a song, and he sometimes joined group members for backstage card games. "Hanging with him is like hanging with anybody else," says Campbell, "then it's not. He's a complex guy." For his first three days on the job, Campbell rehearsed old rock and country covers – none of which Dylan ever played live. "There was a lot of off-the-cuff stuff," says Campbell. "It was a very amorphous existence."

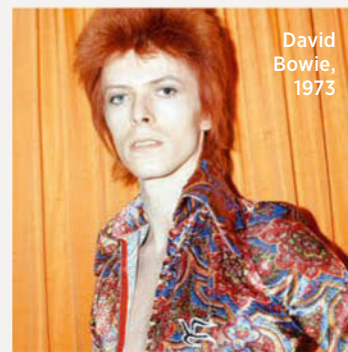
PATRICK DOYLE

BOWIE IS... EXHIBITION LANDS IN MELBOURNE

REVIEW

After breaking records as the highest selling show ever held at London's Victoria and Albert museum, the *David Bowie Is...* exhibition has settled into its new home at Melbourne's Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), where it will stay until November 1. The show is an audio and visual feast, and from the moment you slip on the audio guide headphones and enter the exhibition Bowie's voice fills your ears with his narration and random recollections. His outfits, sketches and memorabilia (yes, there's even his coke spoon) paint a picture of an artist with an incredible degree of vision and forward planning. The sequential order of the show and its oblique captions are confusing, no doubt by design, but that doesn't detract from the experience one bit. You don't leave thirsty for more Bowie knowledge. Allow two hours to immerse yourself in Bowie's world and we challenge you to leave uninspired.

MATT COYTE



David
Bowie,
1973

FOUND TREASURE

John Belushi's Great Lost Punk-Rock Record

THE 1981 "SATURDAY NIGHT Live" performance by L.A. punk rockers Fear remains one of the show's most notorious – punks stormed the stage, one yelled, "New York sucks!" and the group was banned from *SNL*. Fear got the gig thanks to singer Lee Ving's friendship with the late John Belushi. Now, an unreleased song, "Neighbors", that Belushi recorded with the band is being released



Belushi and
Ving, 1981

as a single. "We're proud of it," says Ving, who wrote the song for Belushi's 1981 film *Neighbors* (the movie's producers cut it from the soundtrack). Ving got permission to use the song from Belushi's widow and mixed it at Dave Grohl's studio. Belushi and Fear had recorded it months before the comedian's 1982 death, which still haunts Ving: "So devastating. It disrupted all of our lives."

KORY GROW

Spring's most anticipated rock books: Four veterans write their memoirs, and Tom Petty opens up to musician-turned-author Warren Zanes in a revealing biography *By Andy Greene*

SEPTEMBER 8TH

OCTOBER 27TH

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A photograph of Joan Baez singing into a microphone. She has long, wavy, light-colored hair and is wearing a dark jacket. Her eyes are closed and her mouth is open in a passionate expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

former Heartbreakers drummer Stan Lynch to break his long silence and dish on their bitter split. "Petty's story is a band story," says Zanes. "That meant I didn't just need his participation, I needed that band to open up to me. And I needed Stan Lynch to be among them."

A.G.

The Songs Szymon Left Behind

Szymon Borzestowski's stunning debut gets a release three years after his passing

EMI'S MARK HOLLAND WAS STILL making his way as a major label talent scout in 2007 when he struck gold in the most unlikely of places: the unsolicited demo pile.

Back before Soundcloud, artists would send off their demos in the hope that someone like Holland would pluck them out of obscurity and sign them to a lucrative recording deal. "It's the white whale of the A&R process," Holland says, laughing.

But one day – among the nu-metal hopefuls and MOR singer-songwriters – Holland found something he could show his then boss Craig Hawker, former Vice President of A&R at EMI. The CD-R was attributed to Szymon (spelt phonetically as "Shimon"), and the track was called "Brokenworld", a finger-picked folky lament with striking vocals and strangely alluring chords. The only other clue about his identity was a phone number affixed to the jewel case. "I didn't know if it was a 40-year-old guy playing a Seventies folk demo, or a brand new artist," Holland says. "But I walked into Craig's office and was like, 'You have to hear this. It's just glorious.'"

Hawker agreed, and the pair eventually tracked down the singer, 19-year-old Szymon Borzestowski from Newcastle. Szymon's father had sent over the demo unbeknown to his son, who has travelling around Europe at the time. Upon his return, Holland and Hawker drove up to Newcastle and signed him to a development deal. "He was a really interesting guy. You can tell when people are really artistic," Holland says. "He saw things differently to everyone else."

The second youngest of four siblings, Szymon was a prodigiously talented clarinetist and saxophonist who decided to devote his gap year to composing and recording music. His younger brother Dominik – who plays drums with Sydney rock band Gang of Youths – recalls the moment Szymon realised he had a gift for composition as well. "It wasn't like he was writing or experimenting during school – he only discovered that he could write music in that time when he finished Year 12. He came out of his room one day and was like, 'Hey mum, I think I can actually write music.'"

Szymon's early tracks were instrumentals, but buoyed by the interest from EMI he began singing as well. "That was the last



TROUBLED TROUBADOUR Szymon Borzestowski started focusing on music in his gap year

thing he introduced [to his music]," says older brother Kubush. "We knew he could sing – he had done a couple of musicals at school – but it wasn't like he was playing in cover bands around town or anything."

"I was blown away by his falsetto and layered harmonies," adds Dominik.

After EMI came calling, Szymon used the money to update his "pretty basic" set-up – a freeware recording program called FruityLoops, cheap microphones and a pair of speakers from Kmart – and immerse himself in writing and recording an album. The tracks began filtering through in March 2009. First came "Golden", another bittersweet folky number with those unmistakable vocals, followed by the stems for another 10 songs delivered on hard drive to EMI in late 2009. It was then that things went awry.

"He said, 'Here's the album, I need to take a break,'" says Holland. "The way that we interpreted that was that he wasn't ready to tour, he needed to go away and have a think. In March or April of 2010, Craig and I drove up to Newcastle and had a chat to him by the beach. He didn't go into any detail about what was going on, but he said he needs time to focus on himself, rather than the album."

As it turns out Szymon was in the midst of a severe bout of depression; one that came on very quickly, but would ultimately

claim his life. It was December 2012 and he was just 23 years old. "Prior to that he was into a lot of different things, had a lot of friends, a good childhood – he didn't have any troubles," Kubush says.

In a heartbreaking turn of events, his funeral was the first time many friends and family heard his music. And in the months following, Hawker, Holland and the Borzestowski family decided to share Szymon's gifts with the world. They brought in Rusty Santos (who had worked with one of Szymon's favourite acts Animal

Collective) and producer/engineer Ian Pritchett to mix *Tigersapp*, a collection of 12 songs left behind. The album reflects a broad spectrum of sounds (both organic and electronic) and influences – from the jazz standards of Szymon's youth to the music that inspired him later in

life such as Röyksopp and Bonobo.

"The music is full of light and hope and love," says Dominik. "Something I hope for is that it will encourage people that are perhaps struggling with mental illness or going through bad times."

For Kubush the whole process has been bittersweet.

"There's still pain – we miss him, we love him, we were blessed to have him for 23 years – but we've got something incredibly special that was a big part of his life."

DARREN LEVIN

"He was a really interesting guy. He saw things differently."

Australia's Spookiest, Coolest Venue

Is the Fremantle Arts Centre the most unique live setting in the country?

GIVEN ITS HISTORY, IT'S PERHAPS not surprising the Fremantle Arts Centre is allegedly one of the most haunted buildings in Western Australia, if not the entire country. Founded in 1864 and built by convicts, it opened its doors as the Convict Establishment Fremantle Lunatic Asylum and Invalid Depot and, in the early 20th century, was declared a Poor House and Women's Home, right up until 1941. Not that General Manager Marcus Dickson is buying into it. "It's a story some people want to be true," he laughs, "but I really don't think it is."

Whatever the case, the Arts Centre is emerging as one of the most unique live venues in the country. On every Sunday throughout summer and the warmer weeks of spring and autumn it hosts free gigs in its leafy, 1000-capacity front courtyard, while



UNPLUGGED Abbe May (above) performing as part of the Gallery Sessions in July.

the 3,400-capacity South Lawn has housed the likes of Nick Cave, Tame Impala and John Butler, all in the shadows of the intimidatingly Gothic-styled structure. "Even Nick Cave won't have played in a venue like that, with the side drop of an 1860s Gothic former mental asylum," says Dickson.

In addition to also hosting gigs in the smaller inner courtyard – which is surrounded by tall limestone walls – the main gallery room, with its five-metre high ceilings, is home during the winter to the Gallery Sessions, in which artists such as Abbe May (pictured) are tasked with performing without amplification to an intimate room of around 90 people. The opportunity is there for audiences to take a free tour of the Centre's exhibitions, hosted by one of its curators. "We like to give high quality, unique and intimate experiences for the artists and audience," says Dickson. "It's extremely satisfying."

ROD YATES

Wilco Star Wars

NEW ALBUM
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SCREAM FOR ME!
Bruce Dickinson in
action



PROFILE

Maiden's Book of Revelations

UK metallers survive cancer scare, make most ambitious album to date **By Rod Yates**

OF ALL THE ARTISTS TO HAVE had an influence on Iron Maiden's new album, *The Book of Souls*, babyfaced British crooner Jamie Cullum would, you'd imagine, rank low on the list. And yet in some small way, his imprint can be felt on the record's centrepiece, "Empire of the Clouds", which at 18 minutes and one second is the longest song ever to grace an Iron Maiden LP. Composed solely on piano – another first for the British metallers – by vocalist Bruce Dickinson, the singer started tinkling the ivories after winning a piano at a charity bash. "I went along with a couple of mates and my wife and got a free-

bie dinner, it was one of these charity auction things, and I thought, 'Freebie dinner here, I really should buy something', he explains, nibbling on a bun and sipping a cup of tea at the London offices of the band's record label. "There was a whole lot of stuff in this silent auction that I wasn't interested in, like facials – there'll be some people who think that means something else – but there was an electric Yamaha piano and I thought, 'OK, go on then.'" He lets out a loud cackle. "And it was signed by Jamie Cullum! So I bid on it and I won the damn thing."

Said keyboard sat in a box for six months, until one day Dickinson decided "to muck around" with it. Slowly but surely the bare bones of "Empire of the Clouds" started to come together; the pro-

cess gathered steam when Dickinson spied a Steinway grand piano in Paris's Guillaume Tell Studios, where the group convened late last European summer to start recording the album, their 16th studio effort. "We'd normally work until about 6 or

7 o'clock, and the piano was just off the main studio, so I'd wait until the band disappeared off down the pub and I'd spend a couple of hours every night doing my finest Ludwig Van, trying to figure out how it works," recalls Dickinson. "Most of the parts for the song were written for Irish

fiddles or French horns or cellos, but I knew it was going to get played by guitars, and as soon as it gets played by guitars it instantly gets Maidenised."

Not only is the song the longest in the band's catalogue, but the 11 tracks that

"I diagnosed myself right down to the tumour it was," says Dickinson.

GETTY IMAGES

comprise *The Book of Souls* combine to make the longest album of their 40-year career, weighing in at 92 minutes – ostensibly, a double album, the band's first. “We got about six songs in and went, well, we're either going to stop now or it's going to be a double album, and off we went.”

The Book of Souls continues a hugely productive period for the band – since 1999, when they reunited with Dickinson (who left in 1993) and guitarist Adrian Smith (who exited in 1990), the sextet have released five studio albums, each more progressive in song composition than the one before. They've also issued myriad compilation and live albums, as well as embarking on lengthy world tours; the 2010–2011 run of dates in support of 2010's Grammy-winning *The Final Frontier* saw them play in front of two million fans in 36 countries. (Dickinson, a qualified commercial pilot, flew the band, crew and stage

set between dates on their own modified Boeing 757, ‘Ed Force One’.) It was during a 2014 tour that bassist Steve Harris shared with Dickinson his conceptual ideas for *The Book of Souls*, the title-track of which is inspired by Mayan beliefs that the soul lives on. Coincidentally, Dickinson had for some time been working on a solo album based around the concept of a machine that steals people's souls. Harris heard its opening track, “If Eternity Should Fail”, which Dickinson had demo'd with his solo producer Roy Z, and immediately declared it the perfect opener for Maiden's new record. “The spoken word at the end of the track is actually the beginning of the storyline [for the solo album], and introduces one of the characters, Doctor Necropolis,” explains Dickinson. “And I said to Steve, ‘Does it matter that there's this spoken word and then nothing else happens for the rest of the album?’ And he goes, ‘It doesn't matter, it's talking about souls, it sounds great.’”

“I'm at great pains to stress [the new record] isn't a concept album,” adds Dickinson. “I suppose if you wanted to have a look you'd probably find the word soul in a lot of songs. But that's as far as it goes.”

As the recording entered its final few weeks, Dickinson felt a lump on his neck; “a lymph node that was elevated and had stayed that way for a while”. It wasn't affecting his singing, but there were, he says, a few things that were feeling a little strange, so he did some investigating on Doctor Google and attempted to self diagnose. “I Googled all my bits and bobs

and I actually got it dead right, I actually diagnosed myself right down to the tumour it was,” he says. “And I immediately went, disregard that, because you're probably being a hypochondriac. But on the other hand, there was another bit of me that went, well, why don't you go and get it checked out? And the reason I didn't was because I didn't want to know until I finished the album.”

By early December Dickinson had com-

January, and I was done by the beginning of March effectively.

“I put the life reassessment stuff on hold until I figured out whether I was going to die or not,” he adds with a chuckle. “I felt sorry for myself for a couple of days, and then I thought, ‘No, grow up, it's not a case of why me, it should be a case of why not? It's not personal, it's just happened, so just crack on and get rid of it. Embrace the treatment, the discomfort, all that stuff.’”

The singer has been given a clean bill of health – “Physically I'm bouncing around” – but all touring plans were shelved until next year to give him sufficient time to recover. The 57-year-old has started “a little bit of a roadtest of singing”, and is just waiting for “the cells that make useful things like mucus and saliva and things that lubricate all the throat area, which makes singing much easier, to regrow, which they will. Effectively,” he says, “I'm waiting

for the sprinkler system to get reinstalled.”

By the time that occurs the band's legion of fans will have had an opportunity to digest *The Book of Souls*. Despite their legendary devotion to the British outfit, Dickinson isn't taking anything for granted. “There's a fine line between being spectacularly successful and being spectacularly self-indulgent, and I hope we've fallen on the right side of that line. Because while we've got fans who will tolerate our indulgences, that's not the intention. We want people to embrace the album and really hear it for what it is, which I think is one of the finest things we've done in many years, if not ever.”



MAIDEN ENGLAND The British metallers have released their 16th studio album: (l-r) Adrian Smith, Janick Gers, Bruce Dickinson, Steve Harris, Dave Murray, Nicko McBrain

pleted his vocals, and a GP was summoned to the studio. He informed the singer he needed a CT scan on his chest, a biopsy of the lump and a head and neck MRI as soon as possible. Within 10 days Dickinson had the results. “I was sitting in front of a radio oncologist who said, ‘We're going to give you chemo for nine weeks and 33 sessions of radiation and we're going to get rid of it for you.’ And I went, ‘I do hope that's true.’ And that started on the 5th of

SPARE A FEW MINUTES?

Maiden are no stranger to epic songs. Here are five of the longest.

1. Empire of the Clouds (18:01)

Penned on piano by Dickinson, at one point he worried that “this is sounding a bit Billy Joel”. Then Maiden's three guitarists stepped in and put an end to those concerns.

2. Rime of the Ancient Mariner (13:38)

Based on the Samuel Taylor Coleridge poem, until “Empire...” it held the award for ‘Longest Iron Maiden Song’. On the band's *Live After Death* album, Dickinson memorably introduces it by saying, “And the moral of this story is this is what not to do if a bird shits on you”. Quite.

3. The Red and the Black (13:33)

Also from *The Book of Souls*, it's one of three songs on the record to surpass the 10-minute mark.

4. Sign of the Cross (11:16)

One of the most enduring songs from the Blaze Bayley years – the singer who replaced Dickinson in 1994 – it's one of only a handful from that era to remain in the live set upon Dickinson's return.

5. When the Wild Wind Blows (10:59)

The Steve Harris-penned song closes 2010's *The Final Frontier* in epic fashion.

FIVE NOTES

Bahamas

AFTER A DECADE, THE CANADIAN FOLKIE IS FINALLY HITTING THE BIG LEAGUES

1 HE'S RULING THE FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

Afie Jurvanen has spent the past 10 years making textured, spirited folk-rock as Bahamas, a bit like Toronto's answer to M Ward. His first full-band Australian tour will hit three festivals in September/October, including Hunter Valley's inaugural Dashville Skyline. "Festivals are a big part of touring for us," he says. "That's all we're doing right now. It's a good chance to have your music introduced to a lot of people."

2 THE BAND NAME HAS PAID OFF, GOOGLE BE DAMNED

Initially just wanting a title "for this art project I was starting", Jurvanen relished the difficulty of finding the band online. But the name's sunny connotations have trumped its Google-unfriendly limitations. "It conjures up imagery for people before they even hear the music," he observes. "People tell me the music sounds so breezy or tropical: they're getting all of that just from the name."

3 HE BEAT OUT LEONARD COHEN FOR A JUNO AWARD

His third album, 2014's *Bahamas is Afie*, won two Junos (the Canadian equivalent of Grammys), including one for Songwriter of the Year. "Canada is a small music economy," says Jurvanen, "so that reverberates through the whole industry." It's all part of his slow but steady rise: "There's never been some big spike where everything changed overnight. There's been upward momentum for seven or eight years. That's a nice, comfortable path for me to be on."

4 HE CUT HIS TEETH AS A GUEST GUITARIST

Before devoting himself fully to fronting Bahamas, Jurvanen collaborated with everyone from Feist to Howie Beck. He even came along on City and Colour's 2011 Australian tour as their guitarist, as well as playing solo as the support act. "All of that was really formative for me," he recalls.

5 WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE NEXT ALBUM

The downside of doing every festival around is less time for actual songwriting. "It's a cruel irony that when I'm at home I actually play a lot more music," notes Jurvanen. "When you're on tour you spend most of the day travelling, and then you play for an hour at the end of the day. It's a reverse schedule." **DOUG WALLEN**



LIFE'S A BEACH
Afie Jurvanen
AKA Bahamas

REYNARD LI

Briggs' Indigenous Awards Triumph

Victorian rapper wins big at the NIMAs, makes plans to launch new record label

A HALF MOON IS HIGH OVER Darwin. Indigenous music has had its annual day in the sun – a tiny window, we know, for the continent-sized sprawl represented by the fifth annual National Indigenous Music Awards.

On stage, East Journey and Yothu Yindi are mashing yidaki, clapsticks and solid rock in body paint and blue jeans. Sitting under giant fig trees backstage, clutching three NIMAs between them, Victorian rappers Briggs and Philly are facing another direction: a planned new hip-hop label called Bad Apples Music.

"To be straight up, there's a lack of a black point of view, especially in rap music, in Australia," says Briggs, whose *Sheplife* has just won Album of the Year and "Bad Apples" Best Film Clip.

"Which is just unheard of. You go anywhere else and there's a black culture that has differentiated itself from the original culture from which it stems, whether it's African-American or Hispanic..."

Sure, the phrase 'Aussie hip-hop' is out there, he adds, "but I wasn't feeling it because I didn't grow up like that. I grew up listening to Snoop Dogg and Ice Cube. To me, it was odd to separate from that."

Philly, this year's Best New Artist, knows what he means. Whatever respect he might feel for Hilltop Hoods and Bliss N Eso, the industry has already decided that's not where he belongs.



CLEANING UP Briggs (left) and Philly: big winners at the National Indigenous Music Awards in Darwin on July 25th.

"It's crazy how myself and other Aboriginal artists just kinda get put into this indigenous hip-hop [category], without being asked or anything," he says. "You're black and you rap, so that's indigenous hip-hop."

Briggs smiles. "Australia has a real good track record of picking and choosing the history it likes." The intent of Bad Apples Music is to write its own history.

"To all these young fellas who might have felt like Aussie hip-hop just wasn't for

them, I'm saying, 'I've got a platform for all of us,'" Briggs says. "I'm sayin', 'You're as good as the next man and your story is as important – if not more important, because it's never been heard before. And it's from a real place.'"

Briggs says he's working on the governance of the new venture in coming months, and hopes to work with Yung Nooky, Birdz and more while Philly records his debut album, due in 2016.

MICHAEL DWYER



FIDLAR ON THE ROOF

(From left) Brandon Schwartzel, Max and Elvis Kuehn and Zac Carper

FIDLAR'S SURPRISING NEW MESSAGE

Cali party punks deliver sobering second album, 'Too'

FIDLAR broke from obscurity in 2013 with a debut self-titled LP that preached three core values – skating, partying and getting loose. The young L.A.-based punks played shows like there was no tomorrow and partied with the same mindset. Something had to give. "I overdosed three times

in a month – two times in one week!" says 27-year-old frontman Zac Carper. "It got to the point where I saw my life and I was like, 'I am going to die if I keep fuckin' doing this.' With the first album, everyone clinged onto the whole party aspect, but really I was writing those songs because I was depressed."

As a result, FIDLAR's second effort, *Too*, plays a little like a cautionary tale. Songs like "Sober," "Overdose" and

"Stupid Decisions" came out of Carper's attempts to stay clean. "I became the frontman of a band that had songs like 'Wake Bake Skate,' 'Cocaine' ... You get in this mode of like, 'Yeah, let's sing about getting fucked up all the time!' But that's fuckin' bullshit. I looked past that and said, 'I'm not that person. I still have problems and music is helping me work out my problems.' This new record really shows that."

MATT REEKIE

To Live & Dine on Flesh in L.A.

The 'Walking Dead' zombie apocalypse shambles out West

By Rob Sheffield

A TYPICAL SCENE IN *Fear the Walking Dead*: two cops around a Los Angeles hospital bed. Some junkie kid got hit by a car while he was running down the street screaming about the undead horrors he'd just witnessed

Fear the Walking Dead
Mondays, 8.30 p.m., FX

– a drug den where a half-naked zombie girl is feasting on human flesh. One cop says, “You were raving about flesh and blood and viscera.” The dude mumbles, “I don’t know what viscera is.” Uh-oh – people eating people? This could be a bad sign. Is this just the drug-addled ravings of a zonked-out junkie? Or is America on the verge of a full-blown zombie apocalypse?

You’ve probably already guessed the answer, with some help from the title. *Fear the Walking Dead* is one of the year’s most hotly awaited TV debuts, the companion to AMC’s mind-boggling, massive *Walking Dead* juggernaut. If you don’t know what viscera is, you will most certainly find out. *The Walking Dead*, based on the Robert Kirkman comic books, is a blockbuster of flesh-chomp zombie porn that just keeps getting bigger. Meanwhile, this Kirkman-supervised prequel cleverly expands the franchise, taking us back to the early days when law-abiding citizens can only watch in terror as their friends and neighbours suddenly turn into monsters. As one character puts it, “When civilisation ends, it ends fast.”

Fear the Walking Dead starts off with an ordinary dysfunctional L.A. family. The dad, Cliff Curtis, is a high school English teacher, leading a class on Jack London and the eternal battle of civilisa-



NO KISSING!
Teen romance on *Fear the Walking Dead*.

tion versus nature. (His spoiler: “Nature always wins!”) His girlfriend, Kim Dickens, is the guidance counsellor, with her own brood of alienated teens: Her son Nick is a heroin addict, looking very James Franco in his ratty Eighties Baracuta jacket, and her over-

achieving daughter, Alicia, is on her way to Berkeley. Unless, that is, something goes horribly wrong. Like maybe a mysterious flu epidemic that turns out to be something much, much worse.

The zombies here aren’t exactly big on personality, but

part of the appeal of the whole saga is that there’s no pressure to get emotionally involved with anyone onscreen – there’s just the chompers and the chomped. (Or the not-quite-yet chomped.) The humans aren’t underdog heroes, especially since most of them have slightly less survival instinct than your average squirrel. So you don’t root for any of them; you just try to guess which one gets picked off next. And after watching these dreary folks bicker on and on about their feelings, you’re more than ready for some zombies to show up and bring the ruckus.

But the best thing about *Fear the Walking Dead* – and the reason it adds something genuinely new to the recipe – is the way it makes L.A. the main character, playing around with locales we recognise. At one point, two lowlifes meet at what seems to be the exact same diner where John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson argue about bacon in *Pulp Fiction*. Except instead of debating whether it’s disgusting to eat pork, they’re talking about zombies stuffing their faces with human brains.

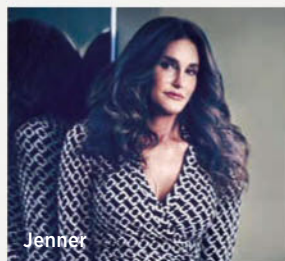
There’s an element of burn-Hollywood-burn sadism behind all the urban-breakdown violence. *Fear* has the vibe that L.A. suffers because it gets stuck with the blame for everything that’s wrong with our sick society. That has driven melodramas from *Earthquake* to *Demolition Man*, from *Helter Skelter* to the infamous *Quincy* punk-rock episode. L.A. is the city that’s pretty when it cries – that’s why it’s so good at starring in disaster stories. As George A. Romero himself figured out by the time of *Day of the Dead*, there’s only one thing scarier than zombies in the woods: zombies at the shopping mall. This is the *real* decline of Western civilisation, made all the nastier by the fact that the undead will be munching on whatever’s left. L.A.: It’s what’s for dinner.

SHORT TAKE

Ms. Jenner’s New Reality

I Am Cait
Mondays, 9.30 p.m., E!

I Am Cait is reality TV’s bombshell of the year – if only because it’s one of those rare fluke moments when reality TV slips over the line and starts to overlap with something that feels like real life. Not that Caitlyn Jenner is an ordinary person in any way, but her story has actual emotional content – which is the last thing any fan expects from Brand Kardashian. It’s touching to see her stumble into her new life as America’s most famous trans woman, especially since she never really got a handle on the celebrity hustle in



the first place. Watching Cait try to figure out the things we all try to figure out – how to walk, how to talk, how to tell the truth to her mum or how to go outdoors in a swimsuit – is a hitherto unknown television experience. **R.S.**

The Intimate Return of Beach House

Baltimore duo deliver their first album in three years, 'Depression Cherry'

IN THE RURAL LOUISIANA STUDIO where Kansas cut "Carry On Wayward Son", Beach House's Alex Scally was having a guitar moment of his own. "Sparks", the duo's comeback single after a three-year absence, features the kind of dramatic, discordant noise My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields would be proud of. "I don't know where that came from. Maybe that riff" – Scally sings a few bars of Kansas' prog rock classic – "came back from the dead and haunted me."

Depression Cherry is the fifth album Scally has made with his cohort in Beach House, singer Victoria Legrand. It follows two albums – 2010's *Teen Dream* and 2012's *Bloom* – that took a humble recording project between two friends to large theatres and festival stages around the world. "I did think there was a moment



when we were touring in 2012 where certain venues of 2000 or above didn't feel like we could get our thing across. It didn't feel like our show, or our music," Scally offers.

So they countered the more expansive live feel of those LPs and made something a little more intimate and claustrophobic, with less live drums and futuristic synth

sounds. Although, as Scally tells it, nothing in the Beach House universe is ever really planned. "When we write records we just try and shut off everything. We shut off thinking about touring again, the climate in which this album will be released."

The album's self-penned press release features quotes from philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, author Banana Yoshimoto and Van Morrison. Coupled with the lyrics, they seem to suggest a record about loss and the

passing of time – but Scally says the quotes are mere "jumping off points". He'd prefer others to impart their own meaning onto the record, which is why *Depression Cherry* comes with a stark red velvet cover. "We work in an abstract manner and have the feelings of the music be as big as possible," he explains.

DARREN LEVIN

Stereophonics

"Keep
the
village
alive."

The brand new album
out September 11
Feat. *C'est La Vie* &
I Wanna Get Lost With You

Available on Deluxe 2CD,
CD, Vinyl & Download

10 COMMANDMENTS

Gay Paris' Rules of Rock & Roll

IT'S BEEN A LONG, SWEATY SLOG FOR SYDNEY'S Gay Paris. The band emerged in 2009 with a potent stoner/metal/blues blend and began touring relentlessly, pausing only to record two mind-bending independent LPs. The quartet's new album, *Ladies and Gentlemen, May We Present To You: the Dark Arts*, is a more focused affair that sees Gay Paris capitalising on lessons learnt. Here, vocalist Luke Monks and guitarist Lachlan Marks share their wisdom.

Thou shalt be on point lyrically

Monks: "Don't sing about rock & roll: you're not AC/DC. There's no need to be Burroughs-level obscure or Plato-level deep, but lyrics can't be an afterthought."

Thou shalt not work with big producers for the sake of it

Marks: "With this record, we went to the U.S. and got caught up in the digital arms race. Over there, everyone's trying to get the most ridiculously loud, digital-sounding shit. By the time we finished, we realised that we needed to start again. So we came home, started from scratch, and made a raw rock record."

Thou shalt not deny thy early influences

Marks: "On album two, we resisted some of the punk and metal elements of our collective past and explored a swamplier sound, but with *The Dark Arts* we've made peace with the fact that it's in our bloodstream."

Thou shalt have top-notch backing vocals

Monks: "Whether you're someone with an excellent voice like Diana Ross, or you just have great lyrics but aren't the greatest sing-

er – like Peter Garrett or me – backing vocals have to be there. On this album, everybody sings, except Simmo [Adam Simpson, drums]."

Thou shalt hit the road

Marks: "You're not a real musician until you've felt mildly suicidal in the 15th hour of a drive, sitting in the back seat of a van watching your bandmate shame-eat KFC. That's when you know you're in a real band."

Thou shalt write with a live audience in mind

Marks: "We custom-built this album to play live. We tried to bring back themes and resolve melodic ideas rather than just piling every fucking idea we had in the bag on top of each other. It was 'songs first, riffs second.'"

Thou shalt share good times with the audience

Monks: "You don't want the crowd to be an object and you be the subject – everyone should be involved in the one event. It's communal."

Thou shalt not covet another band's rider

Monks: "Unless they offer to share it with you, stay the hell away. Now that we're doing mostly headline shows, this really gets to



DARK ARTISTS
Gay Paris (Marks far right; Monks, centre and back)

"Being at a rock concert is not an excuse for communism, people."

me. Play nice: being at a rock concert is not an excuse for communism, people."

Thou shalt not be a songwriting dictator

Marks: "Don't be precious with songs. Unless everyone feels like they're contributing, why would anyone want to show up and play in the band with you?"

Thou shalt support thy bandmates – off stage and on

Monks: "Whether they've got a tiny baby or a ridiculous dream of academic success, let your bandmates be themselves off stage. I think we'd hate each other if our lives were nothing more than Gay Paris."

DAN F. STAPLETON

Reinventing Carly Rae Jepsen

UPDATE IN 2012, CARLY RAE JEPSEN'S "Call Me Maybe" lodged itself in the global brain for an entire summer, topping the U.S. charts for nine weeks and establishing Jepsen as a budding teen-pop star. Then things started to go wrong. Jepsen claims her label rushed out her next album, *Kiss*. "We pushed it through in two months to chase that song," she says. *Kiss*'s sales were disappointing, and Jepsen's next move was to take a role on Broadway in *Cinderella*. She found herself somewhat allergic to new music – instead, she'd listen to jazz and Eighties hits by Cyndi Lauper, Prince and Madonna as she jogged around Manhattan. "I saw Cyndi [Lauper] play in Osaka and was amazed that her songs still sounded so fresh, so yearning and painful," she says. "I wanted to put out songs like that, right now."

Jazz, Prince and Cyndi Lauper: Jepsen

Jepsen took her time making her new Eighties-washed album, *Emotion*. Determined to shake her bubblegum image, she reached out to co-writers like Dev Hynes of Blood Orange and Vampire Weekend's Rostam Batmanglij. The result is an assertive, nuanced LP that shows off her songwriting chops: "Now, I can show up to photo shoots and be like, 'I'm so happy to be here, but I don't want to wear the fluffy pink dress.'"

RACHEL SYME



DOCUMENTARY

The Roots of the Cable-News Shoutfest

Revisiting Gore Vidal and William F. Buckley's explosive 1968 debates

IN ONE CORNER SAT GORE VIDAL, author and liberal bon vivant; in the other was William F. Buckley Jr., talk-show host and founder of the conservative *National Review*. It was 1968, and ABC News, desperate for ratings, invited them to debate the presidential conventions over 10 nights. ABC was hoping for some fireworks – and got them. By the time Vidal called Buckley a "crypto-Nazi" and Buckley threat-



Buckley and Vidal

ened to sock his "queer" opponent in the face on live TV, ABC realised it had struck gold.

That is the centrepiece of *Best of Enemies*, a documentary directed by Robert Gordon and Morgan Neville that suggests this clash of celebrity intellectuals gave birth to the shouting matches that dominate today's punditry. "As soon as I saw the first debate, I thought, 'My God, it's like they saw the future,'" Gordon says. Buckley and Vidal trade witticisms and insults as Miami seethes and Chicago burns. "That's why they pissed each other off," says Neville, who directed 2013's backup-singer doc *20 Feet From Stardom*. "They realised they were dealing with equals."

DAVID FEAR

Jason Isbell's New Morning

The former Drive-By Truckers blew up his life – then became a master of Southern-gothic heartache By Patrick Doyle

JASON ISBELL FELT A RUSH OF familiarity when he watched the final episode of *Mad Men* on his tour bus. As he saw Don Draper go AWOL from his advertising job and embark on an aimless cross-country road trip, Isbell recalled his own life around 2008, after his first marriage had fallen apart and he'd been fired from the Drive-By Truckers due largely to his heavy drinking. Isbell bought a motorcycle and took off from his home in Alabama. "I drove down to Florida, back up through Georgia and visited some of the girls I had met on the road," he says in a husky Alabama drawl. "It's a wonder I didn't kill myself. I got home feeling and looking worse than when I'd left, just completely lost."

Isbell eventually went to rehab and turned his dark past into some of the best music to come out of Nashville this decade. On 2013's *Southeastern*, he reflected on cocaine nights at Super 8's, mistreating vulnerable women, and starting over. "I was behaving in a way that was deplorable on a lot of levels," Isbell says, drinking Red Bull and smoking cigarettes on his tour bus, outside the Capitol Theatre in Portchester, New York, one recent afternoon. "The problem with drinking is you can drown out your conscience until it shuts up." Bruce Springsteen called *Southeastern* a "lovely record" and sneaked up on Isbell at a Dr. John benefit to sing Isbell's song "Traveling Alone" into his ear. Isbell sold out four consecutive shows at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium in October.

"I'm kind of picky about songwriters, you know," says John Prine. "But when I heard *Southeastern*, it just killed me. I loved it. I like songs that are clean and don't have much fat on them – every line is direct, and all people can relate to it. That's what I try to do, and that's what Jason does. I really haven't heard anybody that different in probably 30 years."

Old ghosts still exist on Isbell's new album, *Something More Than Free*, like an ex-lover who spills unflattering stories about Isbell to his wife. But Isbell finds more material in the common truths of the overworked and underprivileged people of the rural South – truck loaders, railroad workers, housewives. "I don't think on why I'm here or where it hurts/I'm just



CLEAR EYES, FULL HEART
Isbell in Nashville this year

lucky to have the work," he declares on the title track, which he wrote partly about his father, a retired house painter. "Physical labour, manual labour – if you can stay close to those folks, there's always plenty to write about, 'cause their issues are real issues."

Isbell grew up in the low-income town of Green Hill, Alabama. "People came to school [just] to eat lunch," he says. Green Hill is 30 kilometres from Muscle Shoals, where Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Percy Sledge and others did some of their best work. As a teenage guitarist, Isbell got to know many of the musicians on those records while sitting in at bars with bassist David Hood and organist Spooner Oldham.

As a student at the University of Memphis, Isbell made up songs to entertain his frat brothers and read original verse at poetry readings. One night, Isbell sat in with the Drive-By Truckers, a hard-living band led by Hood's son Patterson. The Truckers invited Isbell to join as a full member,

and he left on tour with them just two days later, becoming the third great voice in the group after Hood and Mike Cooley, who had just completed *Southern Rock Opera*, a concept album about Lynyrd Skynyrd. Isbell boiled down complex ideas into novelistic songs like "Decoration Day", a devastating chronicle of family/neighbour turmoil, and "Danko/Manuel", in which he compared his demons to those of two fallen members of the Band.

Isbell had no problem adapting to the Truckers' lifestyle. He would wake up and start drinking, finishing off a fifth of Jack Daniel's by the end of a show. "We were lucky if we could walk off the stage," he says flatly. "I'd wake up in a lot of pain and not know where I was – some girl's house somewhere."

Isbell married bassist Shonna Tucker in 2002 after, he says, she saved his life one drunken night (she joined the band a year later). But the honeymoon didn't last long.

JASON ISBELL

"I slept with people I shouldn't have slept with," he says. "I started going outside the marriage." They separated – sort of. "We were still in the band together, and so we were only separated by the distance between those two bunks," he says. "She didn't deserve that, but I shouldn't have married her in the first place."

The toxic environment – combined with Isbell's explosive temper at the time – was too much for Hood and Cooley, who fired Isbell in 2007. (They've reconciled.) Isbell burned more bridges, lost more friends and recorded two albums with his band the 400 Unit. In 2011, he started seeing Amanda Shires, an old friend who had played fiddle and guitar with everyone from the Texas Playboys to Todd Snider. She had little tolerance for his excuses: "I told somebody in her presence, 'I don't drink in the morning,' and she said, 'Your morning is one in the afternoon. And you do drink at one in the afternoon.'" Shires and friend Ryan Adams convinced Isbell to go to rehab. "Rehab is like a divorce," he says. "The divorce isn't nearly as sad or shitty as the two or three years leading up to it."

After sobering up, Isbell started reading "big, thick books", including Gabriel García Márquez's *100 Years of Solitude*, Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* and Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* – and dedicated six to eight hours a day to writing songs full of aphorisms like "There's one thing that's real clear to me/No one dies with dignity" and "Is your brother on a church kick?/Seems like just a different kind of dope sick."

"A lot of people in Nashville think that the best song is the catchiest, or the one that sells the most copies," he says at one point. "They're editing songs in a way that makes them seem more consumable, I guess. I'm trying to edit them in a way that makes them more honest."

One of those songs is a new single, "24 Frames", a searing account about how loss can upend one's world. "I still have the problem of thinking I'm in control of things I'm not in control of," he says. "No matter what you thought your plans were, that's not how things are going to work out, and that's the only way you can really, I think, live successfully."

Isbell takes a long drag off his last cigarette and cracks another Red Bull. "With karma too, it's like, 'What have I done to deserve this?' That's always the wrong question. It doesn't matter. The only right question is 'What do I do now?' That's it."



WETTER, HOTTER
Amy Poehler and Bradley Cooper in the *Wet Hot* TV series

HOT SHOW

The Triumphant Second Life of a Cult Comedy

How 'Wet Hot American Summer' went from box-office flop to Netflix series

IN THE SUMMER OF 2001, A LOW-budget summer-camp comedy called *Wet Hot American Summer* hit theatres. Despite featuring a spate of future stars – including Bradley Cooper, Amy Poehler, Elizabeth Banks and Paul Rudd – the movie grossed less than \$300,000 and was torn to shreds by critics.

But just as it seemed like *Wet Hot American Summer* would be forgotten forever, young people everywhere fell in love with it. Midnight showings started popping up all over the U.S. "It became a thing where if you were on a date with somebody and they didn't like *Wet Hot*, you know it's not gonna go well," says the film's star and co-writer Michael Showalter.

"It's filled with anti-humour, where the joke is there is no joke." Talk of a sequel began percolating, and Showalter and David Wain, the director and co-writer, approached Netflix about turning the film into a miniseries. "Netflix was emerging as a medium that wasn't quite a TV series, but not quite a feature film," says Wain. "It was the perfect wide canvas for us."

All of the original cast members returned for the eight-episode series (which premiered on Netflix on July 31st). This time, they were joined by newcomers Kristen Wiig, Michael Cera, "Weird Al" Yankovic, Lake Bell and Jason Schwartzman, as well as *Mad Men* vets Jon Hamm, John Slattery and Rich Sommer.

The original *Wet Hot* was shot at Camp Towanda in Honesdale, Pennsylvania; for the series, the camp was painstakingly re-created in Malibu. The film takes place on the last day of camp in 1981, but the show takes place entirely on the opening day that same summer. Many cast members are now in their forties, but most portray teenagers. "It adds a layer of comedy," says Wain. "You're only aware of it for the first couple of minutes of the show."

The show manages to be even more ridiculous than the movie, with a complex

plot involving an undercover government assassin, an Israeli soccer coach and the origin story of the talking vegetable can from the film. "When the dust settles, we'll think about whether [we want to make another season]," says Wain. "Summer camp was a defining experience in my life, so I'm not surprised that there tend to be more places to go there." **ANDY GREENE**



Rudd and Marguerite Moreau

Marina Shines in Chicago

DAWN TO DUSK "PEOPLE CALL ME a pop artist," says Marina Diamandis, the U.K. singer who makes music as Marina and the Diamonds. "But the music I'm making isn't pop in terms of being bubblegum or current." That's certainly true of the ambitious, intimate dance-tinged songs on her new album, *Froot*, which recently became the first release in the 29-year-old singer-songwriter's career to hit the Top 10 in America. We caught up with Diamandis the day before her official performance at Lollapalooza, where she checked out the Art Institute of Chicago before playing an intimate acoustic gig at a ROLLING STONE party.

ALEXANDRA EATON



FACE TIME
Getting made up in her hotel before heading out into the city

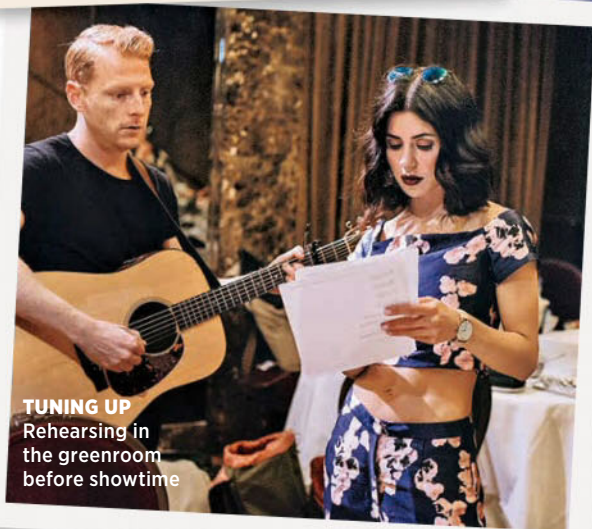


WALL FLOWER
At the Art Institute

To see an exclusive video of Marina's day in Chicago, including behind-the-scenes footage and live clips, visit <http://rsa.us.com/marinaacoustic>.



MEET AND GREET
Diamandis says some fans she meets "cry a lot and shake as well".



TUNING UP
Rehearsing in the greenroom before showtime

ON THE GO ▲ En route to the show: "Generally I'll write in my hotel or do some sort of production up until 4:00, and then I'll go to the venue," she says of her touring schedule.

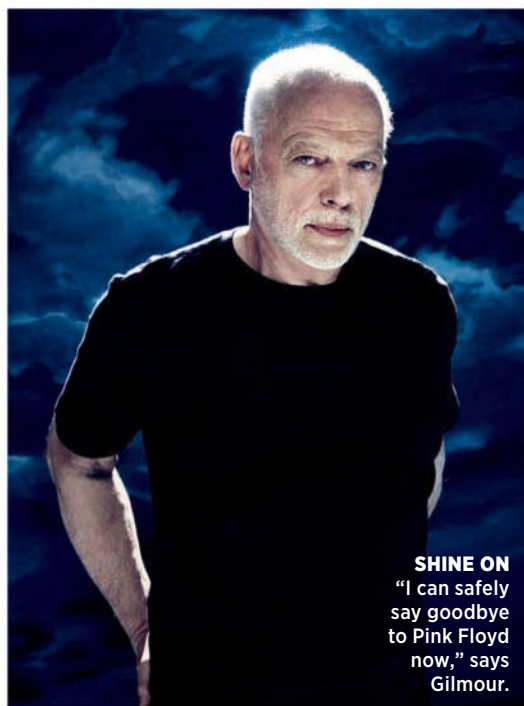
ONE OF A KIND ► "I'd rather create gigs that are special than do 20 shows a month."



David Gilmour Finds Life After Pink Floyd

The guitarist on his new solo album and why the Floyd is really, really over this time

DAVID GILMOUR'S UPCOMING album, *Rattle That Lock*, is his first solo LP since 2006's *On an Island*, but it wasn't supposed to take so long. "I meant to get back to work earlier," says the Pink Floyd guitarist. "But certain things got in the way." Gilmour is presumably referring to the 2008 death



SHINE ON
"I can safely say goodbye to Pink Floyd now," says Gilmour.

of Floyd keyboardist (and his main creative collaborator) Rick Wright; the arrest and four-month imprisonment of his son Charlie over a 2010 political protest; and Gilmour's decision to transform some of Wright's last recordings into the final Pink Floyd record, last year's *Endless River*.

With all that behind him, Gilmour was finally ready to focus on *Rattle That Lock* (due out September 18th), which he co-produced with Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera. It's a loose concept record that follows a man's thoughts over the course of a single day, as he contemplates everything from drone warfare to the sorrow of death to the challenges of raising kids.

Many of the lyrics were written by Gilmour's wife and longtime lyricist, Polly Samson, and the fluid, atmospheric music will be familiar to anyone who's heard Floyd's post-Roger Waters catalogue. "A Boat Lies Waiting" is a tribute to Wright that features David Crosby and Graham Nash on background vocals. "I recorded the rolling piano on that song on a minidisc 18 years ago," Gilmour says. "You can hear my son Gabriel squawking on it as a baby, and he's now 18. Polly thought the rolling motion suggested the sea, and Rick's big love was sailing his yacht. It just reminded me of him."

On September 12th, Gilmour kicks off a European tour. It'll be the first time he's done a tour, Pink Floyd or solo, without Wright on keyboards in more than 30 years. Gilmour is still figuring out the set list — Wright's absence makes it highly unlikely that the Floyd classic "Echoes", which features Wright on vocals, will make the list. "It wouldn't be right to play that song," says Gilmour. "I might do 'Shine On (You Crazy Diamond)' again. I haven't completely closed the door to doing Pink Floyd songs. They're so much fun."

The tour hits North America in March; so far, only four cities have been announced. "I want to play places that are a bit magical and have a good atmosphere," Gilmour says. "My worry is whether I'll enjoy it as much as I did last time. That

tour was such a treat, and I just hope without Rick there it will be as much fun."

Endless River got some Pink Floyd fans hoping the band still might have some life left in it, but Gilmour is quick to clamp down on those thoughts. "That part of my life gave me so much joy, laughter and creative satisfaction," he says. "We had a lot of good companionship 95 per cent of our time together. I wouldn't want the five per cent that was a little more sour to make my view of it less enjoyable. But I've done it. Getting into huge stadiums again doesn't fill me with any joy or anticipation. I don't think it would be pleasurable, so I think I can safely say goodbye to that now."

ANDY GREENE



COMEDY

LILY TOMLIN: DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK

Lily Tomlin is hot. The 75-year-old comedian's Netflix show, *Grace and Frankie* (which co-stars Jane Fonda), earned her an Emmy nomination. Her new film, *Grandma*, a comedy about a lesbian who helps her granddaughter get an abortion, opens later this year. As Tomlin once said, "The road to success is always under construction."

***Grace and Frankie* is a show about two older women rebooting their lives after finding out their husbands are having an affair with each other. Why do you think it's clicking?**

We embrace issues that old people have to deal with that, truthfully, aren't so different from what younger people deal with. You can start over at any time, you know.

In *Grandma*, your character helps her granddaughter get an abortion at a time when access is being rolled back across America.

Gloria Steinem famously said, "If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament."

You married your partner, Jane, in 2013. You didn't hide your relationship, but you didn't make an announcement either.

It wasn't easy for me to come out. When I was doing specials in the Seventies, everybody knew that Jane and I were a couple. I had one of our writers say to me, "I think you and Jane should come to work in different cars." I said, "Well, we're not gonna go out and get another car just to drive to work!"

You hit back with a joke.

I was always really nimble, you know. I couldn't betray myself or lie about myself. I was on *The View* not long before I came out. Barbara [Walters] said something like, "You've never been married. Have you just never found the right guy?" I said, "Now, Barbara, you and I both know that's not the reason." And she just shut right up.

LOGAN HILL



HASHTAG

Radio, Radio

Clockwise from top left: Beats 1 DJs Annie Clark (St. Vincent); Elton John; Pharrell Williams and Scott Vener.

Inside Apple's Music Moves

The company may be winning the streaming wars – will it take over the music industry?

By Steve Appleford

AS OF EARLY AUGUST, APPLE Music, the company's long-awaited on-demand streaming service, seemed to be a success: Overcoming technical glitches and complaints about a complex interface, Apple announced 11 million trial-subscription sign-ups in five weeks – more than half of chief competitor Spotify's paid international user base. But the music industry was at least as happy about another aspect of Apple's musical efforts: the company's free Beats 1 online radio station focusing on new music, which broadcasts live 24/7. "It's exciting," says Glassnote Records president Daniel Glass. "Everyone's watching them on music discovery."

When Drake wanted a high-profile debut in late July for "Charged Up" – a salvo in his beef with rapper Meek Mill – he chose his own Beats 1 show, a venue that hadn't even existed the month before. Beats 1 is meant to promote Apple Music's on-demand streaming, which debuted

alongside it on June 30th, but the station is becoming a force in its own right, starting to break songs ("New Americana", from rising alt-pop star Halsey) and raising excitement with a new approach to a very old medium – though Apple hasn't released listener numbers, and terrestrial and satellite radio aren't going anywhere. "It's really simple," says Beats co-founder Jimmy Iovine, who sold the company to Apple last year. "All the people of the world listening to the same song at the same time."

"It's a nice hybrid of the past and the present," says Vampire Weekend's Ezra Koenig, who has his own show, as do Beats co-founder Dr. Dre, Elton John, Pharrell Williams, Queens of the Stone Age's Josh Homme and St. Vincent's Annie Clark.

Beats was working hard on playlists tagged to users' musical tastes – an approach that continues on Apple Music, which offers targeted suggestions under its "For You" header – when Nine Inch Nails frontman Trent Reznor, who was Beats' chief creative officer, decided it needed something more universal as well. "I realised it would be cool to hear some-

one talking," says Reznor, "to turn on the radio and feel a part of something."

Beats 1 is meant to help build what Iovine calls "an ecosystem" around Apple Music. "The [other streaming services] feel like they were designed by engineers," says Reznor. Adds Iovine, "Why use the word 'service' if you're not a service? If you're just a utility, what's the point?"

The station's vibe was designed by U.K.

DJ Zane Lowe, who garnered a reputation as a tastemaker during a 12-year career at BBC1. The combination of hip-hop, indie rock, pop and EDM that Lowe has brought – along with heavy doses of U.K. grime artists – lend the station an unapologetic hipness. "It's not

concerned about what's charting," says Reznor. "And we don't do research. Just go with what we think is cool."

The third segment of Apple Music's "ecosystem" is the Connect network, which gives artists home pages where they can release content directly to fans. Apple is already scoring major exclusives, with artists from Dre to Keith Richards using Connect to debut new music – striking at a chief selling point of Jay Z-owned compet-

"We don't do research," says Trent Reznor. "Just go with what we think is cool."

In the Studio With the Waifs

Vikki Thorn (bottom right) captions her photos of the Waifs recording their new LP, 'Beautiful You', in Byron Bay.

(1) "Ms Donna straight from her beach yoga session ready to make it sing."

(2) "Josh was in vintage guitar heaven. When he cut 'Cracks of Dawn' there was silence in the room. Step aside, girls. We let him have a moment here and there."

(3) "What better than a baby to keep the love flowing... and a rack of vintage guitars."

(4) "We met Nick DiDia (producer) the evening before we were to start recording. We sat around and played through the songs acoustically. We tried to explain to him who the Waifs are, why we do what we do etc. Time was ticking and he said, 'Let's shut up and play.' Sometimes you need that kind of no bullshit direction."



APPLE

itor Tidal. Apple even helped make music videos for Drake, Pharrell and Eminem. Drake, meanwhile, has reportedly struck an exclusive deal to release new music with Apple for as much as \$20 million. "They're extending themselves aggressively," says Glass, "to A&R people, to managers, to record companies. They want to collaborate creatively."

Apple is already the world's largest music retailer. With its aggressive plays to dominate streaming, not to mention artist development and promotion, the world's most valuable company seems poised for even more decisive domination of the industry. But no one is ringing alarm bells just yet. "I don't think they have too much power," says Miguel manager Troy Carter. And the players inside Apple see a chance to remake a struggling industry. "With the scale, power and resources that Apple has," says Reznor, "I can think of no company better to be a part of to try and pull this off." **ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY STEVE KNOPPER**

A GUIDE TO THE STREAMING WAR

The streaming future of music is taking shape – but which service should you choose? Here's a guide to the three biggest contenders



Apple Music

Biggest strengths: Beats 1 radio is unique. Service integrates with iTunes. Deep, smartly curated playlists.

Biggest weakness: Interface can be confusing for casual users.

Free option: Non-subscribers can use radio – including Beats 1 – and Connect, but can't access the on-demand library.

Exclusive content: Growing – from Dr. Dre's *Compton* to Taylor Swift's entire catalogue.



Spotify

Biggest strengths: Easy to use. Elegant, well-developed mobile app. Lightning-fast streaming.

Biggest weakness: Discovery features are weaker than Apple's. A few major artists (Taylor Swift, Thom Yorke) aren't available.

Free option: PC users can listen to any track (with ads); app users only get Pandora-like radio.

Exclusive content: Limited, but Prince debuted a new song on the service.



Tidal

Biggest strengths: The only major service with a full-CD-quality tier (for \$19.99 a month; Spotify-level quality is \$9.99). Frequent big-name exclusives.

Biggest weakness: High-quality sound is pricey. Glitchy search. Reported business struggles could impact users.

Free option: 30-day trial

Exclusive content: Extensive, from Lil Wayne to Rihanna, though in some cases limited to videos.

MY SOUNDTRACK

Glen Hansard

With a new solo album out this month, the singer-songwriter reflects on the songs that made him who he is **By Rod Yates**

The Song That Makes Me Cry

R.E.M. "Hairshirt", 1988



"The first song that ever made me cry. My girlfriend put it on a mixtape for me and I was missing her really bad, and I was in the bath in my mother's house listening to this tape and that song came on and I just burst into floods of tears. Crying wasn't a big thing when I was growing up, so to have that release was just huge. I actually got to sing it with Michael Stipe a few years ago, and it blew my mind. He told me it had brought a tear to his eye listening to it, too."

The Song I Want Played At My Funeral

Willie Nelson "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain", 1975



"It has that lovely lyric: 'Some day when we meet again up yonder, we'll stroll hand in hand again, in a land that knows no partin', blue eyes crying in the rain.' I heard it for the first time in Melbourne, I was with my band and we were at a party at my friend's house, and we had a couple of beers and were sitting on the porch. The violin player from my band, Colm Mac Con Iomaire, took up the guitar and started playing this song and I was fucking knocked out. Then I went and listened to Willie's version and loved it. If I make a mixtape for anyone it's always on it."

The Song I'm Most Proud Of

The Frames "What Happens When the Heart Just Stops", 2001

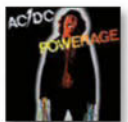


"Sometimes when you write a song all you're really trying to do is create a sentiment; you're trying to create a sense of space and vulnerability, or strength in your weakness, or honesty or whatever it is you're trying to create. When I sing that song I can mean it now as much as when I wrote it. And that's a really powerful feeling. The song is all about shutting down, and jealousy, and

asking the gods above to turn your heart off 'cause you're hurting so much, and then one day they do."

The Song I Play Air Guitar To

AC/DC "Down Payment Blues", 1978



"My confirmation name is Angus. You get to pick a name for yourself when you're 12 years old or whatever, and I picked Angus, 'cause I was the biggest AC/DC fan on the planet. He was my first idol. *Powerage* is like a Bible to me. The writing between Bon Scott and the two Young brothers on that record is just unbelievable: 'I got myself a Cadillac but I can't afford the gasoline.' Fuck! Come on!"

The First Song I Learned To Play

Bob Dylan "Ballad in Plain D", 1964



"My uncle's guitar got left at my house, and he'd taught me a few chords, but he also taught me how to tune. And so I could tune the guitar before I could really play it. And because I could tune it I could tune it into records, so I'd listen to records and tune the guitar into the albums. And I remember picking this out by ear and feeling so proud. In fairness the clue was in the title, so I knew what the opening chord was!"

The Song I Listen To When Hungover

Serge Gainsbourg "Ballade de Melody Nelson", 1971



"I was on a flight a couple of days ago, I was coming back from the Czech Republic, I was in a pretty rough state, and I put it on and I absolutely loved it. You just get lost in it – it goes beyond your intellect, it just becomes something that you let yourself go and float into. It's just pure mood. Incidentally, it was recorded on my birthday in 1970, so it's fascinating to think that as I was being pushed out into the world screaming, somewhere in Paris Serge Gainsbourg was singing. I can picture it all now."

The Song I Wish I'd Written

Leonard Cohen "Famous Blue Raincoat", 1971



"It's written in letter form. The whole song is a letter to a friend, or a brother maybe, to somebody who took his lover, and it's a song of forgiveness and understanding. The compassion that Leonard is able to produce in that song, even though this guy has done him wrong, the fact that he's able to say, it's OK, I love you and I love her and the world doesn't make sense, and we're all victims of our own needs and desire... it's unbelievable. It speaks of a world that I have always longed to be in, which is the world of men and women and the complication and senselessness of what it is to love."

The Song That Reminds Me Of Growing Up

The Specials "Ghost Town", 1981



"I grew up in Ballymun, which was Dublin's own projects. And this was a very poignant song when we were kids. There were a lot of drugs and it was a troubled neighbourhood, and this reminds me of an aspect of where I'm from that I'm really nostalgic for, even though at the time it was pretty horrific. In the tower blocks there was this really strong wind that would blow around the buildings, and I remember my mother bought me a pair of black combat trousers, and I'm walking around listening to this song on my Walkman and just loving it."

The Song You Wouldn't Expect Me To Like

Bee Gees "Love You Inside and Out", 1979



"One of my favourite songs of all time. It's one of the most well crafted songs. Sometimes when I say it to a mate they say, 'What?! You like that tune?!' Those lyrics! It's such a statement of, take it or leave it, this is how I feel about you, and I love no other way. Brilliant."



Angus Young
was my first idol.
'Powerage' is like
a Bible to me."



Mac DeMarco's Bathtime

Photographed by Danny Cohen

"The shoot took place in my bathroom the day after Meredith," recalls Danny Cohen. "The band came over and we hung out and chatted about how Melbourne reminded Mac of home and how welcoming he found everyone here. He's a really chilled, humble guy – very funny too. I remember he was commenting his toilet activities with the door wide open, explaining what he'd eaten recently and what smells we should be expecting. Our original plan was for Mac to be submerged with a bunch of cigarette butts floating in murky water, but we were tipped off that this might cause nicotine poisoning through his skin, so we opted for a

safer option. We'd already pre-lit the bathroom, so he just stripped down to his jocks and lay in the tub chatting and smoking. Then my stylist Etta placed cigarettes all over him – every time he finished smoking one he'd just dip into the pool around him and light another. I threw in a few Australian coins and my favourite ornamental ash tray into the corner of the shot as a little photographer's stamp. That night he played a show at Shadow Electric, and I brought him the leftover cigarettes as a gift in a plastic bag. He was absolutely stoked, there would have been a few hundred there, enough to last him the rest of the tour."

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THE FUTURE IS NOW

We profile 10 of the hottest artists who are climbing the charts, breaking the Internet or just dominating our office stereotypes . . .

JONES JNR.

SOUNDS LIKE: Vintage soul meets hip-hop, like someone went back in time and taught Sam Cooke how to use a sampler

FOR FANS OF: Mayer Hawthorne, Jamie Lidell, Pharrell

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Morgan 'Morgs' Jones and Ev Jones may not be related, but their history runs deep: the pair grew up together in New South Wales' Blue Mountains ("I've got a photo of us playing Under 8's soccer together," says Ev), the former becoming a member of hip-hop crew Thundamentals; the latter moving into hospitality. Cut to now where the friends have teamed up as JONES Jnr. for a smooth blend of soul-pop/hip-hop that has seen them share stages with the likes of Mark Ronson, Bettye LaVette, Kelis and Charles Bradley.

THEY SAY: "Meeting Bettye LaVette was a huge moment," says Ev. "She was at the end of this long room and her band lined the walls, just staring at me. I told her I was singing earlier, and she says, 'That was you?! We were all singing your song!' Then she started singing one of our tracks! I was like, 'Oh shit! Thanks!' I freaked out. It was an amazing moment."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The summery doo-wop of "Perfume", found on feelgood debut EP *Step on Sleep*.

JAMES JENNINGS



SARAH DANZIGER



MØ

SOUNDS LIKE: Feisty synth-pop that's pugilistic and introspective

FOR FANS OF: Robyn, Lykke Li, Spice Girls (and the subsequent solo career of Mel C)

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: A Top 20 presence thanks to her starring role on Major Lazer and DJ Snake's "Lean On", the 27-year-old Danish singer, born Karen Marie Ørsted, has been wowing festival crowds around the world with fun sets of spiky pop that can fill the dance floor while still being highly personal. Her debut full-length, last year's well regarded *No My-*

thologies to Follow, is slinky and smart, full of pulsing beats and dreamy, diaristic lyrics: She records in her childhood bedroom, which she's retrofitted as a studio.

SHE SAYS: "A lot of things have inspired me over the years. [When I was young], it was the Spice Girls, and all kinds of pop music. When I was a teenager, it was Black Flag and Sonic Youth and Nirvana and Smashing Pumpkins. And when I turned 19, it was M.I.A. and Santigold – electronic and hip-hop stuff, which got to me so hard. . . . It's super important that you keep [music]

personal, and when you make music you don't strive to sound like what's hot right now. I love pop music, and I've always loved pop music – I love catchy songs, and I love music that can appeal to a big audience. But I think it's so important that you don't just copy, or try to be someone else. It's so important that you keep it personal and unique, and you push the borders instead of staying in your comfort zone."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The hand-clap-driven "Pilgrim" bridges the gap between MØ's bedroom and the festivals.

MAURA JOHNSTON

"I love pop music, and I've always loved pop music – I love catchy songs."



ULTIMATE PAINTING

SOUNDS LIKE: England's best New Zealand indie-pop band

FOR FANS OF: Luna, the Bats, Olivia Tremor Control

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Jack Cooper and James Hoare have followed up last year's acclaimed self-titled debut with *Green Lanes*, continuing a fondness for neatly composed, quietly beautiful pop songs. They've toured with Twerps and shared bills with White Fence and King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard.

THEY SAY: "There's a lot happening in America. We did some pretty extreme drives," says Hoare. "We drove over a thousand miles in one day and only stopped twice. There's always some kind of shenanigans going on."

"We were touring with Twerps, and they got ill, so we decided to drive to Austin from Atlanta," adds Cooper. "It was a brutal drive. When we were telling people about it, hard-tourers were like, 'Holy shit.'"

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The duo's latest single, "(I've Got the) Sanctioned Blues," is an earnestly disorienting, lightly profane pop shuffle.

TOBIAS CARROLL

RADIOACTIVITY

SOUNDS LIKE: Two-minute power pop anthems foretelling the nuclear holocaust

FOR FANS OF: The Ramones, the Exploding Hearts, Bad Religion

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: "I don't wanna die, I got a thousand things to say," Radioactivity frontman Jeff Burke sings on the post-punk blast "Silent Kill". Similar sentiments of dread and disillusionment arrive with speed, gusto and sweet beds of backing harmonies on his band's sophomore release of the same name. "The feel of some of the songs was influenced by experiences I had in Japan," says Burke, who toiled in the late Nineties and Aughts in cult garage-rock bands like the Reds and the Marked Men. After Japan's

2011 earthquake left thousands dead and caused nuclear power plant accidents, he was thinking about radiation every day. "That affected the way I looked at a lot of things and led to what a lot of people have said sounds a little darker on this album," he says. Burke's drive to record quickly was held back by the paper-thin walls in typical Japanese apartments. He moved above a jazz bar so he could rehearse freely and had to haul his gear to a pay-by-the-hour studio to get anything done. The speedy, power-pop created with his Japanese band, the Novice, signalled the direction he'd head for 2013's *Radioactivity* and this year's *Silent Kill*. Now Burke is back in the garage rock hotbed of Denton, Texas.



THEY SAY: "[When I lived in Japan,] I worked in an office where I did translation from Japanese to English," says Burke. "Immediately after the [2011 earthquake and nuclear disaster], my job shifted to getting information available for foreigners living in my region. I had to translate ways for people to get out of the re-

gion, and then it turned into how safe it was. Then I'd go home, and turning off work mode and thinking, 'Is it OK here?' That fear is what influenced the songwriting more than what I did at work."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Burke's gnashing sweet vocals on "Silent" lead a bleak yet triumphant punk anthem. REED FISCHER

TOP: JUAN JOSE ORTIZ

SILICON

SOUNDS LIKE: Funk, soul and R&B as filtered through vintage synths played by a sentient 1984 Apple Mac that wants to be Prince

FOR FANS OF: Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Hot Chip, James Blake

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: The son of a Hawaiian hula dancer mother and a New Zealand jazz musician father with an enviable record collection (“we found his boxes of vinyl under the house and would listen to anything that had an interesting album cover . . . I remember being blown away by Frank Zappa’s *Hot Rats* album, *Bitches Brew* – it was all very influential to hear that at a young age”), Kody Nielson enjoyed a childhood where he was given toys to play with of the musical variety (“my Dad was always giving us little keyboards and guitars”). Kody and brother

Ruban ended their noise rock/power pop band the Mint Chicks in 2010 after nearly a decade of activity, the latter going on to birth Unknown Mortal Orchestra (Kody played on and co-wrote/co-produced this year’s *Multi-Love*); the former creating psych-pop group Opossum with partner Bic Runga. Now operating under the solo moniker of Silicon, Nielson created debut LP *Personal Computer* in the dead of night, its themes of technological disconnect and loneliness transmitted via synth funk & soul, coming off like a nocturnal UMO.

HE SAYS: “I mainly recorded *Personal Computer* at home in my spare time. I was listening to a lot of George Duke – mainly his albums *The Aura Will Prevail* and *Feel* – so that was a big influence on the

sound of it. I finished it off when I got back from Portland from working on *Multi-Love* with Ruban, but I’d already written a bunch of stuff and recorded a few ideas beforehand. I like writing and recording at night time – it’s partly out of necessity because it’s the only chance to get a focused period of time to work on something. I’ve got kids, and when they’re awake they’re pretty demanding, so when they go down for the night I get as much as I can done!”

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: First single “God Emoji”, a good indicator of the low-key, hushed midnight falsetto funk to be found throughout *Personal Computer*. Australians will get a chance to hear Silicon live when they tour with Chet Faker in October and November.

JAMES JENNINGS

“**I remember being blown away by ‘Hot Rats’ and ‘Bitches Brew’. Very influential.”**





HOP ALONG

SOUNDS LIKE: If Flannery O'Connor fronted the Replacements: Sharply observed short stories set to incisive, insistent guitar music

FOR FANS OF: Waxahatchee, Eighties R.E.M., Neutral Milk Hotel

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: The Philly crew signed to the venerable indie label Saddle Creek late last year, right around the time singer Frances Quinlan duetted with Rivers Cuomo at a Weezer gig; and earlier this year Hop Along opened for the War on Drugs on tour. But their second LP, *Painted Shut* – one of Rolling Stone's 45 Best Albums of 2015 So Far – reveals a band that should be head-

lining. Over 10 songs, Quinlan sketches out bracingly vivid characters. The heart-breaking "Horseshoe Crabs" imagines the inner life of the late, troubled Sixties singer-songwriter Jackson C. Frank. The album's emotional centerpiece, "Powerful Man", recounts an experience in which the singer witnessed a man beating his child in public and felt powerless to stop it. "It's not a hero's story," she says. "I wanted it to be about how horrible that was, and how I was a part of it by not doing something."

Another standout track, "Happy to See Me", finds strange poetry in the image of a lonely father posting to YouTube at 4 a.m. "That's based on a real person," Quinlan says. "This was back when everyone was freaking out about 2012 and how every-

thing was going to end. This man was routinely posting these videos, and there'd be a lit candle behind him, and he'd go into his spiritual revelations. I got really into watching those."

THEY SAY: Hop Along is a family affair: Quinlan's older brother Mark is their drummer. They see their sibling dynamic as mostly a good thing when it comes to the music. "We're so emotionally invested in each other that there's not the courtesy of warming someone up before you get to the heart of the matter," says Mark Quinlan. "We just get to it."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: In the album's knock-out opener, "The Knock", the narrator wakes up to find Jehovah's Witnesses at her door. Don't you love it when that happens?

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON



CHELSEA WOLFE

SOUNDS LIKE: Lorde if she was actually goth, evil Björk on downers

FOR FANS OF: PJ Harvey, Jarboe, Zola Jesus

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: She's the reigning dark priestess of goth-scarred art rock, romanticising "Grey Days" and "Simple Death" in hazy, haunting songs that span grinding industrial, sparse folk, doomy metal and droning noise. It's foreboding stuff – and yet Queens of the Stone Age took her out on tour and the producers of *Game of Thrones* chose a track of hers (2013's "Feral Love") for the series' Season Four trailers. Her latest record, *Abyss*, is her most intense and dynamic yet. "We've been touring a lot for the past few years so I think naturally I had it in my head that I wanted my new album to have songs that would translate well live," she says. "And what I was writing about was really heavy, so even the more subdued songs have that feeling to them."

"I've dealt with sleep paralysis for a long time. Sometimes the anxiety would follow me."

SHE SAYS: The album's heavy subject matter includes Wolfe's lifelong struggle with sleep paralysis, a phenomenon in which a person is unable to move or speak while passing between wakefulness and slumber; it's often accompanied by a sensation of bodily pressure or choking, as well as terrifying hallucinations. "I've always had sleep and dream issues, since I was a kid," Wolfe says. "I've dealt

with sleep paralysis for a long time and recently started talking about it with other people, comparing experiences. I didn't set out to channel it into the music, it's just, I think having that connection to an in-between state for so many years started creeping into the way I wrote about things – sometimes

the anxiety or strangeness of it would follow me into my day."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Wolfe strings gossamer vocals over metal-on-metal scraping and piston-pumping percussion on *Abyss*' unnerving yet strangely seductive opener "Carrion Flowers".

BRANDON GEIST

THE DESLONDES

SOUNDS LIKE: Old-time country originals with a loose New Orleans vibe

FOR FANS OF: Woody Guthrie, Old Crow Medicine Show, Hayes Carll

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: People who claim to not like country? They'll dig the Deslondes (pronounced "Dez-Lons") and their grooving roots music. While playing in other groups, college buddies Sam Doores and Cameron Snyder crossed paths with Riley Downing at the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival in Oklahoma. Today, Downing credits that encounter around the campfire with learning how to sing harmony, while Doores recalls being immediately impressed with Downing's clever songwriting. In time, they abandoned their other bands and brought in Dan Cutler (stand-up bass) and John James Tourville (pedal steel/fiddle) to round out the line-up.



THEY SAY: "In New Orleans, people love to dance," says Doores, who resides on Deslondes Street in the city's Lower 9th Ward. "People go out there to go two-stepping. It's part of the culture. When you start playing, people grab each other and start dancing. That's what we're used to."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "The Real Deal", written by Downing, matches woeful R&B lyrics to a country-tinged, sing-along melody.

CRAIG SHELburnE

THE BELLIGERENTS

SOUNDS LIKE: Those few disorienting yet glorious seconds after you first wake up and aren't sure where you are, giving way to a soundscape equal parts tough guitars and pop sensibility, channelling the best from both old and contemporary psychedelic rock & roll

FOR FANS OF: Tame Impala, King Gizzard, perhaps a bit of Chris Robinson Brotherhood minus the country twang, with a touch of dance in there, a la MGMT

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Forming amidst the tropical heat of Brisbane, and with a foot in myriad other groups (Moses Gunn Collective, the Furrs, Orphans Or-

phans, Morning Family), the Belligerents' strength lies in their wont to sonically explore. Psych-pop has enjoyed a resurgence of late, but these five aren't merely jumping on the back of the wagon. Rather, they're taking the best parts of Sixties psych and adding a modern, Australian edge to proceedings, producing songs that waft along, but that also hit hard, heavy on the bass and throbbing guitar lines. It's a trip, but a trip that's all their own, set to continue via their soon-to-be released third EP, with a full-length album in the works for release next year.

THEY SAY: "[The upcoming EP is] a huge, huge evolution from our last [2012's *She*

Calls the Shots], it sounds totally different," explains bassist Kon Kersting. "In terms of songwriting, Lewis [Stephenson, vocals] has really fallen into where he should be.

It's much more expansive, much more experimental, lots of different sounds, and it's much bigger. And it's not so much pop anymore . . . I think it's a huge step up."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The first single from the upcoming EP, "In My Way", which has already received solid Triple J play – muscular sonic dreamscapes, bass-heavy and melodic, vocals not afraid to oscillate between falsetto pitch and throaty yell, heralding this Brisbane quintet as ones to watch.

SAMUEL J. FELL





WINDHAND

SOUNDS LIKE: Nirvana vinyl played way too slow, way too loud and backwards (for the subliminal messages)

FOR FANS OF: Electric Wizard, Boris, Mudhoney

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Windhand may be a swampy doom band following in the cloven footsteps of Black Sabbath, but their last album, *Soma* – widely hailed as one of the best metal records of 2013 – sounded as much like stretched-out grunge as it did tried-and-true stoner rock. So it made perfect sense for the Richmond, Virginia quintet to team up

with Seattle-based producer Jack Endino, who has helmed records by Nirvana, Soundgarden and Mudhoney, for the follow-up. The result, *Grief's Infernal Flower*, seethes and crawls like magma, with singer Dorthia Cottrell's mournful wail and molten hooks no longer buried in the mix, blazing the way through a craggy, psychedelic wasteland.

THEY SAY: "The early Sub Pop records were a huge influence on me," guitarist and songwriter Garrett Morris offers. "Being a teenager in the late Eighties and experiencing that music while it was actually happening was pretty

special. And of course Jack's engineering and production is what gave it that 'sound'. I spent a good part of my teenage years unsuccessfully trying to emulate the sound of his recordings on my little Tascam Portastudio. All those bands wrote incredibly timeless music that will never sound dated, as far as I'm concerned. They were all successfully able to mix pop hooks with heavy, noisy guitars. It was an incredibly huge influence on us."

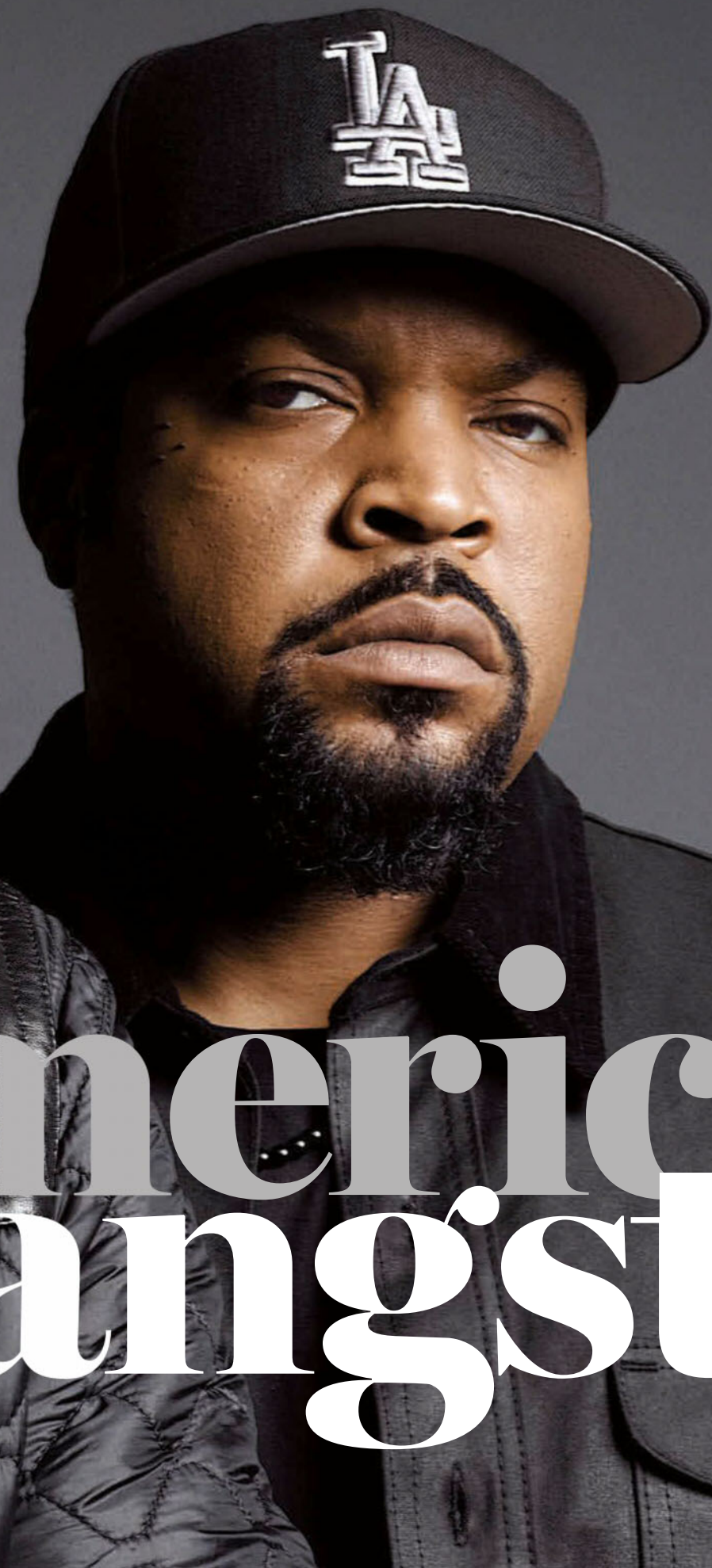
HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The lead single from *Grief's Infernal Flower*, "Two Urns", simultaneously lurches and soars.

BRANDON GEIST



An G

Dr. Dre (left)
and Ice Cube



Inside
the messy,
prophetic
rise of
N.W.A.,
the most
dangerous
hip-hop
group in
the world

**By Brian
Hiatt**

Photograph by
MARK SELIGER



american gangstas

DR. DRE RUBS HIS MOUNTAINOUS right deltoid through a snug black T-shirt, not quite allowing himself to wince. His shoulder hurts. He has an online radio show to record, a sort-of-secret album to mix, a call from Jimmy Iovine coming any minute. But in the middle of an overscheduled July afternoon, Dre – genre-shaping beatmaker; oft-reluctant MC; mentor to Snoop, Eminem and Kendrick; walking, bass-heavy headphone brand – exudes a leonine air of serenity and

control, as if he's executive-producing his own behaviour, moment by moment. A diamond-speckled watch is on his wrist ("I think it's a Rolex – it was a gift"), and crispy white Air Force Ones are on his feet (legend has it he wears a different brand-new pair each day). He's perched on the edge of an oversize brown leather ottoman in the dim lounge of the sleek, gated Sherman Oaks recording-studio complex he just bought and remodelled, after years of renting it out.

It was, under his current circumstances, a trivial purchase. "Right now, financially, I'm so fucking good," says Dre, with some understatement. In the mid-Eighties, a couple of years before the formation of N.W.A, Andre Young was crashing on his cousin's couch; he was so broke he couldn't afford to bail himself out of jail as he collected piles of speeding tickets. Last year, when he and Iovine sold Beats to Apple Inc., Dre took home roughly \$500 million.

Witness the strength of street knowledge.

"I'm not a billionaire yet, man," Dre says. "I will be, hopefully. One day. But let me tell you something: I never have to make another dollar in this lifetime. For the rest of my life, it's just about having fun, being creative."

Dre turned 50 in February, and has had a lot of chances lately to ponder the full breadth of his life's journey. A big-studio but credibly gritty movie version of N.W.A's story, *Straight Outta Compton*, is out on September 3rd – Dre and his former bandmate Ice Cube were deeply involved as producers, with an eye toward preserving both verisimilitude and their legacy. The film was directed by F. Gary Gray, who spent some of his childhood in South Central Los Angeles and made Cube's 1995 hood-

comedy classic *Friday*. It lifts itself beyond the standard stuff of music biopics with its attention to the realities of life in Compton and South Central in the Eighties, where it was easier to find an AK-47 than a job, where the crack trade, gangbangers and cops – under the militaristic command of LAPD Chief Daryl F. Gates – were all out

“We were in the middle of gangs, police brutality, Reaganomics, and there was nowhere to escape,” says Ice Cube.”

of control. "You had to see *why* we did the music," says Ice Cube. "You know, not just 'we were young, angry niggas out of South Central', but why did we make those kind of records? We were living in the middle of dope dealing, gangbanging, police brutality, fucking Reaganomics, and there was nowhere to escape."

The film's most affecting scenes are unnervingly topical in post-Ferguson 2015, dramatising the routine, dehumanising LAPD harassment that inspired Cube to rap about cops who "think they have the authority to kill a minority" on "Fuck Tha Police", the protest song that riled the FBI and served as a harbinger of the L.A. riots three years later. "What's sad is that the 'Fuck Tha Police' record was actually 400 years late," says Cube, with a small laugh. "There's been a thousand Rodney Kings every year that we don't hear about – and just now with technology, we're able to re-

ally see these pockets of bullshit that poor people have been dealing with forever. But that shit is still usually done in the dark – and that's what makes our movie relevant today, and makes N.W.A relevant today."

A lot of musical groups tear themselves apart quickly, especially ones overstuffed with talent and ego, but N.W.A may have set a land-speed record. The definitive lineup – Dre, Cube, the late Eazy-E, MC Ren, DJ Yella – made just one epochal album, 1989's *Straight Outta Compton*, recorded in a mere six weeks, with production that Dre now finds primitive. "Back then, I thought the choruses were supposed to just be me scratching," he says. "We had no fucking idea how big it was gonna become. We were just trying to be stars in the neighbourhood."

Eric "Eazy-E" Wright's triple role as group member, solo star and president of N.W.A's record label, Ruthless, combined with his close partnership with their manager, Jerry Heller, was a destabilising force: As N.W.A finished their first tour, Ice

Cube was on his way out, feeling underpaid. Two years later, just as N.W.A completed their second LP, *Niggaz4life* (which was musically more sophisticated but far cruder lyrically), Dre left, also grumbling about finances. "Dre was just gone," says Yella. "He said, 'I'm leaving. You wanna come?' I was like, 'Um, I'll let you know.' Until this day, I never let him know." By the time the album hit Number One, N.W.A were dead.

The aftermath was ugly, especially when Dre and his friend the D.O.C. started Death Row Records with Suge Knight. Dre devoted chunks of his 1992 solo debut, *The Chronic* – and the

entire, vicious "Dre Day" video – to mocking Eazy ("Eric hated it," says Ren). But the surviving members insist that N.W.A were on the verge of a reunion shortly before Eazy's 1995 death from AIDS complications. "I really thought we was mending what was broke," says Cube. "It's sad, man, because I had so much hope."

"If Eric hadn't passed away," says Dre, "we'd have definitely been working on another N.W.A record, and it would've been amazing. Eric and I talked about how stupid we were with dissing each other."

After N.W.A, Ren began a modest solo career that continues to this day. "But, you know, it wasn't the same," says the MC, who lives quietly in Palm Springs, California. Yella, like Ice Cube, went into the movie business, albeit a slightly different segment: He produced and directed some 300 porn films before returning to DJ'ing a few years back.

Senior writer BRIAN HIATT wrote the *Rush* story in RS 766.

WITH ITS THRILLING, troubling, often hilarious mix of nihilistic gunplay, casual misogyny, ghetto reportage and furious protest, *Straight Outta Compton* was both a great album in its own right and a cultural pivot point. It

ject matter straight from Ice T's "6 'n the Mornin'" and Schoolly D's "P.S.K." In 1985, one of the group's direct predecessors, Compton rapper Toddy Tee, condemned LAPD tactics in the underground hit "Batterram", named after the tanklike vehicle cops used to smash down doors without warning. And Dre, meanwhile, would

EVERYONE KNEW ERIC Wright, at least on certain blocks of mid-Eighties Compton. You couldn't miss him. He stood five feet five on a good day, with an intriguingly singular speaking voice, a high drawl buzzing through his sinuses. He kept a couple of thousand dollars in cash in his sock and usually wore sunglasses and a Raiders cap over a Jheri-curved mullet. "He was the neighbourhood hustler," says MC Ren, who knew him years before N.W.A. "He had all the tight girls, money, jewellery. He was about that paper."

But when Wright was in his early twenties, his cousin was shot dead, and he began to rethink his path. His first thought was to work in the post office like his dad, and Ren says he went so far as to take a civil-service test for the job. Then a more glamorous option presented itself.

Circa 1987, Dre and Yella were members of World Class Wreckin' Cru, a DJ collective – complete with shiny, Morris Day and the Time-style suits and synchronised dance moves – that had evolved into a recording act. "When Run-DMC came to the club," says Yella, "we saw how simple their show was – wasn't even a 10-minute show – and we, like, looked at each other and said, 'We can make records.'"

Dre would wear a stethoscope onstage and whisper-rap stuff like "I'm Dr. Dre/Gorgeous hunk of a man." He enjoyed the female attention that came his way. "Dre would have one woman in my studio," recalls Cru leader Alonzo Williams, "and another one in the street spying on him at any given moment."

He thought it was funny as hell."

But Williams was nearly a decade older, with a taste for smooth R&B and old-school ideas about showbiz and respectability. Dre began looking for a way out. "We were kinda being controlled a little bit by Alonzo," Dre says. "He had the money and he heard the music a certain way that was much different than the way I heard it."

Dre had gotten to know 16-year-old O'Shea "Ice Cube" Jackson through his cousin, rapper Sir Jinx, and began calling on Ice Cube's precocious writing talents. Cube ghostwrote the danceable, Run-DMC-ish track "Cabbage Patch" for the Cru, which became a local hit. After that, Cube and Dre began collaborating on 16-bar mini-songs that Dre would include on what Cube calls "neighbourhood mixtapes" – recorded versions of the scratch-heavy mixes Dre and Yella were doing for local hip-hop radio station KDAY.



Gangsta Gangsta

Backstage at the Kemper Arena in Kansas City, 1989, on the *Straight Outta Compton* tour: (l-r standing) Laylaw, DJ Yella, Dr. Dre, The D.O.C.; seated Ice Cube, Eazy-E, MC Ren)

augured the coming dominance of gangsta rap and all its permutations; created, in Eazy-E, the archetype of the drug-dealer-turned-rapper, a mantle taken up by acts from Jay Z to Migos; cemented the previously shaky status of West Coast hip-hop; paved the way for *The Chronic*, Snoop Dogg and Tupac Shakur; inspired movies like *Boyz n the Hood* and reached white suburban kids by the millions without compromise. For once, it was the listeners, not the artists, who did the crossing over. "When you're hitting on the truth and striking a chord, everybody wants to be down," says Cube. "I used to bump Nirvana records, right? That dude grew up totally different from me, but he struck a chord."

N.W.A.'s rise also signalled that, from then on, rock bands were going to have a much harder time freaking out suburban parents. "We thought we were so badass," Axl Rose later said. "Then N.W.A came out rapping about this world where you walk out of your house and you get shot. It was just so clear what stupid little white-boy poseurs we were."

For all its impact, N.W.A.'s music was more evolutionary than revolutionary, arriving from a clear lineage. Their de facto first single, Eazy's 1987 track "Boyz-N-the Hood" (written by Ice Cube, produced by Dre and Yella), drew its flow and sub-

listen to Public Enemy on the way to the studio. "That was our go-to," says Dre. "I was the biggest Public Enemy fan – I think it's what inspired the aggression of N.W.A. We just took a different route lyrically."

Like P.E., Dre and Yella strived for controlled chaos in their production, layering and weaponising soul samples. But *Compton* also showed the imprint of Rick Rubin's work with the Beastie Boys and Run-DMC – the *Compton* track "8 Ball" samples "Fight for Your Right". (The influence is even more blatant in one of Cube's pre-N.W.A collaborations with Dre, where you can hear him shout-rapping like a cross between Run and Ad-Rock.)

As he would in his future work, Dre also brought in live instrumentation in the form of funk licks from session player Stan "The Guitar Man" Jones. And for a few thrilling bars on "Gangsta Gangsta", Dre stumbles upon the sine-wave synth whine that would define his mature G-funk sound, and much of 1990s hip-hop. "I didn't know!" says Dre. "We were green as shit, still learning."

The tapes sold mostly via a hip-hop entrepreneur named Steve Yano (who died in 2014) at his thriving outdoor record store at the Radium swap meet, on the grounds of an abandoned drive-in. "It was like, 'This shit gonna be hood shit,'" Cube recalls, "so let's *talk* about hood shit," and that became our signature style." Wright, who had DJ'd parties with Dre before his drug-dealing career, heard the mixtapes and was intrigued.

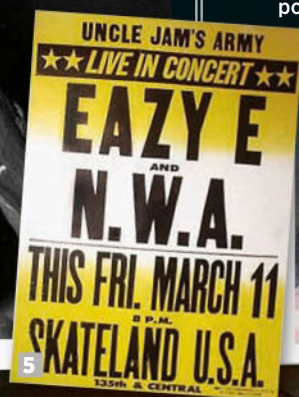
At the time, Dre was driving Williams' old Mazda RX-7, and had racked up enough tickets to earn multiple arrests. "Dre was a wild dude when he was with me," says Williams. "That car was an attention-getter, and he kept getting speeding tickets – and Dre didn't like going to court." Dre also got in trouble trying to protect his little brother, Tyree. "Dre is one of those guys that doesn't mind fighting at the drop of a hat," says the D.O.C. "He lives to knock a motherfucker out."

Eventually, Williams tired of bailing Dre out. Some versions of the story have Dre calling Wright for the money, then agreeing to repay him with production work. Dre says that never happened, but that he did approach Wright with the idea to use some of his drug money to fund recording sessions.

Dre next called upon Ice Cube to write "Boyz-N-the Hood". Sitting in his high school classes, Cube scrawled in his notebook a vividly drawn tale of a young gangsta who "knows nothing in life but to be legit". "It was neighbourhood shit," says Cube, "that we all seen, heard or went through growing up." They brought the track to an ill-starred New York group called H.B.O. (Home Boys Only), who instantly rejected it. In a moment of intuitive genius, Dre came up with the idea of having Eazy-E record it, though he'd never rapped in his life. Coaching Eazy through the song, line by line, over an excruciating all-night session, Dre created a hit record, a brand-new rapper and the seeds of a world-changing group.

Williams was soon out of the picture. He admits he didn't see commercial potential in the "reality rap" these kids were recording in his studio. "The cats I worked with in the business were NAACP-award recipients," he says. "I couldn't bring them a group called Niggaz With Attitude. They'd have thrown me out the fucking window." (He's currently working on a memoir subtitled "NWA: Not Without Alonzo.")

EAZY-E WAS A CURIOUS MIX of puppet and puppet-master: He was owner and president of what would become N.W.A.'s label, but as an artist, he was at the mercy of his ghostwriters and producers. The idea of forming



Express Yourself

(1) Eazy-E in the U.K., 1991. (2) Dr. Dre's pre-N.W.A. group, World Class Wreckin' Cru. (3) Dre and Jimmy Iovine in 2005. (4) Ice Cube in his senior year of high school, 1987. (5) A 1988 concert poster.

a group came up while Cube, Dre, Eazy and Yella were hanging out in the studio, working on songs for Eazy; it seemed so natural that no one can quite recall who suggested it. (Yella thinks it was Dre, while in Jerry Heller's version Eazy masterminded it all.) When Cube jetted out to Arizona for nearly a year to get a certificate in architectural drafting, they brought in another rapper, Wright's friend Ren, to write rhymes for Eazy. "'Ruthless Villain' was supposed to be E's song," recalls Ren. "But it was too fast for him, so when I rapped it, they was like, 'Man, you might as well just get in the group.'"

The last piece of Eazy-E's style came when Dre encouraged a nimble Texas rapper, who would eventually be known as the D.O.C., to move to California and start working with him. The D.O.C. wrote for Eazy's solo debut, *Eazy-Duz-It*, and both of N.W.A.'s albums (including Eazy's famous verse on *Compton's* title track).

"Between me, Cube and Ren," says the D.O.C., "shit, we had all the pieces we needed to make Eazy. We made and designed that motherfucker into probably the greatest rapper ever. Because in 1988, 1989, he was rapping with my voice, Cube's voice and even Ren's voice, as if they were his own."

Completing his raid on the Wreckin' Cru stable, Eazy hired their manager, Jerry Heller, a hard-driving, hard-living music vet who had worked with Creedence, Elton John and Pink Floyd – and heard world-shaking potential in "Boyz-N-the Hood". As Heller recalls in his memoir, *Ruthless*, Eazy told him he was the first white person he'd ever spoken to who "wasn't trying to collect rent or arrest me". Somehow, the two men became friends and partners – and to this day, the other members of N.W.A. blame their business disputes on Heller, not Eazy. (Heller declined to comment for this story.)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PYMCA/UG/GETTY IMAGES; SETH POPPEL/YEARBOOK LIBRARY; SIMONE GREEN

After every major label turned them down, Heller got N.W.A a deal with Priority Records, an indie whose only other big act was the California Raisins. "I heard 'Fuck Tha Police,'" says Priority Records founder Bryan Turner, "and I thought, 'I'm going to scare the shit out of a lot of white people with this stuff.'"

At first, MTV and most radio shunned N.W.A, but the album sold anyway, going platinum that summer on little more than word of mouth. But the relatively innocuous "Express Yourself" finally got them airtime. They also got an unexpected boost from one Milt Ahlerich, assistant director of the FBI's Office of Public Affairs, who sent a threatening letter to Priority Records, chastising them for purportedly advocating "violence against and disrespect" of law enforcement. "It made them even more dangerous," says Turner. "So then kids were like, 'I gotta hear this record. The FBI doesn't want me to hear it!' We probably sold about a million records in conjunction with that letter."

The song led to trouble on their first major tour, with cops refusing to provide security, a matter the group members took into their own hands, toting around a duffel bag full of guns. "Fuck Tha Police" wasn't actually part of the group's set – until N.W.A were pressured by local cops not to play it at Detroit's Joe Louis Arena. "We was like, 'Man, you know what?'" says Ren. "We're gonna do the song!" Cops stopped the show, and the whole group was detained, though never actually charged with anything. Cube and Dre had cooked up the plan without telling Eazy, who was furious – but only because the show had ended before his segment. "He loved the attention," says Ren.

ICE CUBE HAD ONE KEY PIECE of acting advice for his 24-year-old son, O'Shea Jackson Jr., who makes an impressive movie debut playing his dad in *Straight Outta Compton*: "Don't have me frown the whole damn time!" But Cube was the angriest rapper of his generation, so a certain amount of mean-mugging was mandatory. "I know all sides of my dad," says Jackson Jr. "I had to humanise him a little bit."

Ice Cube grew up in the South Central district of Crenshaw with both of his parents in his house, plus a watchful older brother. It wasn't quite enough to keep him entirely out of trouble. "It's hard to grow up in South Central and come out squeaky-clean," says Cube, who has spo-

ken of stealing car radios and other petty crime. "All that shit is coming right to your doorstep. You either embrace it or get run over by it. Fortunately, I started doing positive shit before I really got caught up. Playing sports, doing hip-hop."

For a while, Cube was bused to a nearly all-white school in the San Fernando Valley, 40 kilometres from Crenshaw. "I realised, 'Dang, we really are poor. Shit. I thought we was doing pretty good! We really don't have shit in our neighbourhood.' It was like going to *The Brady Bunch* or to *The Partridge Family* every day. You just see everything's better – from books to classrooms to facilities to teachers."

"Between me, Cube and Ren, says the D.O.C., 'we had all the pieces we needed to make Eazy. We designed him.'"

The experience played into his near-instant suspicion of Heller, N.W.A's manager. "He looked like one of my bullshit history teachers," says Cube, adding that he was accustomed to dealing with white people, so "there was no intimidation factor at all." (Cube does regret his use of anti-Jewish insults against Heller in his diss track "No Vaseline". "I didn't know what 'anti-Semitic' meant," Cube says, "until motherfuckers explained why it was just not OK to lump Jerry with anybody cool. But I wasn't like, 'I wanna hurt the whole Jewish race' – I just don't like that motherfucker!")

Like pretty much every young black man he knew, Cube was regularly accosted by the LAPD from a young age. "When you in the hood, they get you early," he says. "They start fucking with you when you're nine, 10, just to put that intimidation in you, you know? They'll pull you off your bike, make you put your hands on the hood. You'll be sitting on the grass, just played football, and these motherfuckers swoop up and fuck with you. It just happens all through fucking life. Fucking with you if you're bad, fucking with you if you're good – don't matter."

Cube, who was just 19 years old when N.W.A released *Compton*, got most of his

anger out in his music, but not exclusively. In the movie, after a financial dispute, his character uses a baseball bat to smash up Turner's office. "That did actually happen," says Turner, who blames himself for not agreeing to renegotiate Cube's contract. "But we had such a great relationship that I didn't feel threatened for a second." Cube was, as Turner tells it, strategic in his property damage, making a point of smashing an old TV he had been pushing Turner to replace, and leaving his glass desk alone. "I swear to God, man, I remember him looking around the room trying to look for something to break that wasn't too expensive – so he broke the TV, which we laughed about after."

These days, despite a 22-year marriage, four kids and a highly lucrative career in family-friendly comedies, Cube says he hasn't changed much. Over the course of two interviews, he never takes off his oversize sunglasses, and is initially impassive, as if he saves his considerable charisma for movie cameras. But he laughs easily, and gets downright animated, despite himself, when he digs deep into the story of his youth. "I see myself as the same kid – just old," he says. "My anger is still there. But when you're young, sometimes you don't understand shit and you just lash at it. It was easy for me to say,

'Fuck the police, fuck everything, fuck the world', but that's not going to help you. What's going to help you is for me to say, 'Fuck the police, and here's how', or to be the example of how to get out of the hood."

On the other hand, when he addresses N.W.A's depiction of women, he seems to channel his younger self, with rhetoric straight out of 1993. "If you're a bitch, you're probably not going to like us," he says. "If you're a ho, you probably don't like us. If you're not a ho or a bitch, don't be jumping to the defense of these despicable females. Just like I shouldn't be jumping to the defense of no punks or no cowards or no slimy son of a bitches that's men. I never understood why an upstanding lady would even think we're talking about her."

DR. DRE HAS ALWAYS BEEN more distant, more mysterious than Ice Cube. We never forgot about Dre, not even close, but we've never really gotten to know him, either. He's a fierce but stoic presence in music videos; he has never tried to hide the fact that all of his rap verses are ghostwritten (by the very best, from Cube to the D.O.C. to Eminem to Jay Z), and he has never been very talkative in interviews. So [Cont. on 104]

CLOSE-UP

THE LIBERATION OF FRANK TURNER

On his sixth solo album, the British singer-songwriter lets the clouds part

— BY ROD YATES —

FRANK TURNER WAS ALREADY HALF-way across London when he realised he'd lost his tickets for the night's entertainment – a gig by Canadian post-rock outfit Godspeed You! Black Emperor. The show was sold out and he didn't have any money to pay a scalper; worse, he'd not figured out how to tell his girlfriend, who was sitting by his side on the Tube, oblivious to the fact she was about to miss one of her favourite bands. "You know when your bottom lip trembles and you're about to start crying?" he recalls with a chuckle. For no other reason than it seemed like the right thing to do, Turner continued his journey to the venue, all the while contemplating what he was going to say to his partner. When they arrived, his night took a turn for the better. "Some complete stranger put two tickets in my hand and said, 'I hate touts, so there you go.' And he walked off into the night before I could say or do anything."

The gesture stuck with Turner, so much so that in the lead-up to the release of his latest album, *Positive Songs For Negative People*, he instigated a game called Random Acts Of Kindness, and asked fans to tweet him examples of good deeds they'd done for strangers. (The results are displayed on his website.) "On the last record we did this thing called Tour Flag Game, where we made a flag and gave it out on the first day of the tour and we tried to see whether it would get to every town on the tour without any help from us," he offers. "I was convinced it would get nicked, but not only did it do the UK tour, it did the U.S. tour as well. People signed it and sewed patches to it and it fostered this sense of community. So we were trying to come up with a different game for this album. I don't know where it's going to go. I have this slight fantasy that we'll reconnect two people through it."

If it sounds like Turner is in an optimistic mood, it's probably because he is. The 33-year-old Londoner's last album, 2013's *Tape Deck Heart*, surveyed the emotional wreckage of his split with his partner, written from the perspective of the "bad guy", as he refers to himself. "I think all creative people are slightly reactive

against the last thing they did," he offers. "*Tape Deck Heart* was a difficult album to write and to make, and this album is very much the iceberg righting itself after the polar bear jumps off or whatever . . . And that's the weirdest thing I've said all day."

The LP is also, he says, something of a summation of his previous five full-lengths; he doesn't know if that means he's found his sound and that's it for the rest of his life, or if this is an exclamation mark on his career to date and the next album will be "something radically different". Whatever the case, Turner's journey over the course of those releases has been nothing less than remarkable. Emerging from the wreckage of post-hardcore band Million Dead, which released two albums before splitting in 2005, Turner hit the road as a solo performer mining a sound that somehow merged

"This album is very much the iceberg righting itself after the polar bear jumps off."

the lyrical sentiment of Billy Bragg and an ability to personalise the minutiae of everyday life with a sound based as much in punk rock as it was acoustic folk. By 2012 he'd graduated from half-filled sweatboxes to headlining Wembley Arena and performing at the London Olympics opening ceremony.

His latest album, produced by Butch Walker, bears the confidence of a man who has, at the time of printing, played 1,711 solo shows, and climaxes with a live rendition of "Song For Josh". A heartfelt tribute to his friend Josh Burdette who, before taking his own life in 2013 was head of security at the 9:30 Club in Washington D.C., it was recorded at Turner's first show at the venue since Burdette's passing. "Why didn't you call/ My phone's always on," he starts wearily. Later, as he sings "So I remember you making a hole through the kids in the crowd, and I remember you lifting me up each time I fell down", Turner's voice audibly breaks. That Burdette's friends and family were in the audience made the moment even more poignant. "There was a time after I'd done it, we listened back to the tape and I toyed with the idea of never playing that song live ever again," says Turner. "But I think that's a little thought out. I'm just happy and relieved we got the right take on the record."



BRIGHT SIDE

"I think all creative people are slightly reactive against the last thing they did," says Turner.



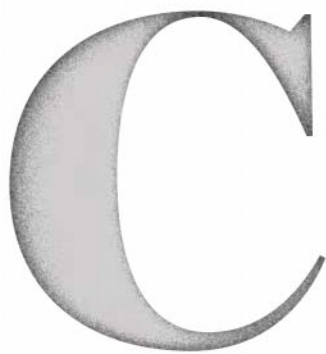
The
LIFE

&

TIMES
of **CHRIS**
CORNELL

The Soundgarden frontman opens up
about the past, the present and the future

BY ROD YATES



CHRIS CORNELL IS IN A RESTLESS mood. Though the 51-year-old is at home in Seattle, and the tour in support of his upcoming solo album, *Higher Truth*, is still a few weeks away, the singer is filling his days not with rest and relaxation, but with “working on other songs and other albums and rehearsing and everything”. There’s not, he adds, “a lot of down time”. Laconic in his delivery yet intensely thoughtful – he’s prone to long answers that occasionally veer off course but always return to the point at hand – Cornell is currently in something of a creative

purple patch. In 2012 he co-penned *King Animal*, the comeback album for Soundgarden, the Seattle quartet he co-founded in 1984. (He’s also just started writing for their new LP.) In 2011 he devised the Songbook tour concept, in which he performs songs from throughout his career in solo acoustic mode. This last endeavour in particular played a big role in shaping the largely acoustic *Higher Truth*, Cornell’s fourth solo studio album. “The idea was to write and record an album that makes the Songbook tours a living, breathing thing as opposed to just nostalgia,” he comments.

In spite of this activity, or perhaps because of it, Cornell is at a point in his life where he’s comfortable looking back at a career that in some ways began the moment he left school at the age of 15, but really took flight when he formed Soundgarden. Along the way there have been side projects – most notably Temple of the Dog, which he founded in the wake of the 1990 death of close friend and Mother Love Bone vocalist Andrew Wood, and featured Soundgarden drummer Matt Cameron and future Pearl Jam members Mike McCready, Stone Gossard and Jeff Ament (the last two were in Mother Love Bone) – new groups (Audioslave); guest spots (he’s sung on releases by Slash and, most recently, Zac Brown Band, to name a few); soundtrack contributions (most famously “You Know My Name”, for the James Bond film *Casino Royale*), resurrections (Soundgarden’s reformation in 2010) and solo albums. And though not all of it has been received with the same amount of fervour – in particular his 2009 R&B flavoured album, *Scream*, produced by Timbaland – Cornell’s position as one of

the world’s finest rock vocalists has never wavered.

There have, however, been casualties. At one point in our interview, Cornell laments the number of friends he’s lost to substance abuse, something that was brought into clear view earlier this year when he performed at the Sonic Evolution concert in Seattle, and was tasked with singing Mad Season songs with the existing members of that group – guitar-

Soundgarden album, *King Animal*. But this album has been a long time coming. All the way back as far as the beginning of Soundgarden I started writing stripped-down experimental acoustic songs, and I’d record them on a four-track, and I was just doing it for fun. And the first time one of those got out to where a lot of people heard it was the song “Seasons” [from the *Singles* soundtrack in 1992], and a lot of people were fans of me doing that kind of stripped-down acoustic songwriting. So probably back as far as 1990 I was thinking about doing a whole album of acoustic songs, or acoustic-ish songs.

Each of your solo albums has a different flavour, be it the more rock-oriented ‘Carry On’ [2007], the sombre ‘Euphoria Morning’ [1999], the R&B tinged ‘Scream’ and now ‘Higher Truth’. Do you feel like you have an identity as a solo artist?

Up until recently I didn’t feel like that was important to me. But walking out on a stage like I did all throughout Australia a couple of years back, playing songs from the earliest Soundgarden periods, Temple of the Dog, Audioslave, all the solo songs I’ve written for films over the years, suddenly I felt like there was this identity to me as a solo artist, because these are all songs that I love, and somehow when you put them into the environment of just an

acoustic guitar and singing they start to live together on a stage and it makes sense. I feel like being in touch with a solo artist personality helped me write this album, and it gave me an excuse to write it, really.

In the past you’ve said each of your albums is a snapshot of where you’re at in life. Though this album is quite gentle musically, there are some biting lyrics – “Murderer of Blue Skies”, for example, is particularly

vicious: “I can’t wait to never be with you again/I can’t wait to lead a life that you’re not in.” Where were you “at” when you wrote this album?

I think songwriters kind of do this combination of creating a character and a storyline, almost like you would create a character in a novel and you write that person’s story. In my case, writing music, you’re sort of writing the soundtrack to that person’s story in a way. To some degree, these characters are me, and to some degree they’re fantasy versions of me, and it’s difficult sometimes even for me to tell the difference between which part of the song is autobiographical and which part isn’t.

A song like “Worried Moon” [from the new album] describes a guy who is sleeping outside and he’s super anxious about his life falling apart because his relationship fell apart. And he’s thinking he’s going to go back and try and repair it but

“As far back as 1990 I was thinking of doing a whole album of acoustic songs,” says Cornell.

ist Mike McCready and Screaming Trees drummer Barrett Martin – in lieu of the fact that vocalist Layne Staley (also of Alice In Chains) had died of an overdose in 2002.

Over the course of an hour and a half, a relaxed Cornell – who returns to New Zealand and Australia in November and December for a solo tour – casts an eye over it all, but with one eye firmly on the future. “To me,” he says, “it’s always been, ‘What are we going to do tomorrow? What song are we writing tomorrow? And what’s our next record going to sound like?’”

When did you start focusing on a new solo album?

Two years ago [laughs]. The reason it took as long as it did is because I was also touring as a solo acoustic artist with the Songbook tours, as well as touring for the

Editor ROD YATES wrote the Daniel Johns cover story in RS 764.



something horrible is happening to them or they die, it's pulling emotion out of you that's really just you allowing yourself to feel your own pain. There's something about that I just think is really powerful and amazing.

The records that I look to as chief influences on *Higher Truth* are ones that I receive that way, like Nick Drake's *Pink Moon* or Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska*, albums with almost no production, kind of homemade records. Another record that really moved me when I was starting to get into more stripped-down albums in about 1989, was Daniel Johnston's album *Songs Of Pain*. Very melodic, amazing lyrics, very personal and pretty funny, but also really depressing sometimes.

What insecurities do you have as a solo performer?

The obvious ones, especially doing acoustic tours where the curtain is opening, you're walking out to entertain every-

one, and they've all paid money and they're sitting in a seat and they're looking at you. And it's your responsibility as the solo artist to entertain them for two and a half hours. If I think about it at any given time of the day when I'm doing it it's pretty scary. The first solo album I put out [*Euphoria Morning*], Soundgarden was no longer a band, that was kind of scary, because I knew it was going

to be very different from Soundgarden, so I knew there'd be a lot of Soundgarden fans that didn't like it. But there were a lot that did, and once it came out I felt a lot of support. It was a fairly unique album, it wasn't what people expected, but in and of itself it was an album that connected with a lot of people in a pretty lasting way. So that was the last time that I got nervous about the notion of being a solo artist.

'Euphoria Morning' was recently re-released on vinyl, but you've changed the title to what you'd originally intended it to be - 'Euphoria Mourning'. How did it come to be spelt differently on the original release?

It was a pretty dark album lyrically and pretty depressing, and I was going through a really difficult time in my life - my band wasn't together anymore, my marriage was falling apart and I was dealing with it by drinking way too much, and that has its own problems, particularly with depression. So I titled the album *Euphoria Mourning*, but right before the record came out and I was doing interviews over the radio for example, if you say "Euphoria Mourning", the listener doesn't know if it's mourning with a "u" or morning without a "u". And that started



The Long Road

(1) Cornell fronting Soundgarden in the early Nineties. (2) With his family in 2014. (3) With *Scream* producer Timbaland (centre) and the Pussycat Dolls in 2008. (4) Mother Love Bone frontman Andy Wood's death was the catalyst for forming (5) Temple of the Dog.

he doesn't know if it's going to work, and he's confiding and projecting this all on to the only thing that's there, which is the moon. It's sort of this vivid portrayal, almost like it's a scene in a film. But I've certainly been in situations in my life like that. So I'm kind of creating a character, but I'm also drawing on my own life experiences to tell that story. I don't put much effort or much concern into the whens and the wheres and the hows, to me it's just kind of fun, I'm just creating something.

Throughout your career, the stories you tell have always tended to dwell on the more downbeat elements of life...

For me to make a connection with music it has to either have a visceral nature, whether it's anger or aggression or that kind of passion which shows up in rock music, or there has to be some sort of melancholy and introspection, something about it that makes you feel your own pain. I think a good song or a good film or a good book, they don't work because they're making you feel the pain of the characters, they work because they're tricking you into feeling your own. Somehow when you relate to a character in a song or a book or a film, and that character's suddenly having a hard time or



to bother me. So I had a conversation with my manager at the time, and said I really love the title but do you think it's confusing? And he suggested that *Euphoria Morning* would probably be a better title. I thought, in contrast to the lyrics maybe that works. And it wasn't my manager's fault, I was a grown man and could say I don't think that's a good idea, and in the back of my mind I didn't think it was a good idea. But mentally I wasn't together enough to really know what was right. So I went with "Morning", and it's bothered me ever since. It even showed up in an early review where someone reviewing the record said that the title sounded like a potpourri scent, and when I read that I was just like [with disdain], "Fuck! Fuck-in' bullshit!" The title was so beautifully poetic to begin with, just the concept of euphoria in mourning; it was a moment I felt inspired and I let all the air out of it. So when we decided to do its first vinyl release I thought, I want to change the fuck-in' title! [Laughs] It's time to change it.

Of all your solo albums, 'Scream' remains the most divisive. Were you taken aback by the vitriol that met the album?

Yes and no. First of all I knew that that would happen. I didn't expect that to not happen. But what I didn't expect was how the release of the album rolled out. What was supposed to happen in the initial conversations was this is going to be kind of a one-off fun thing to do. And we're talking

Rock Royalty

Cornell (with Jimmy Page in 2014) says he never bought a Led Zeppelin record "until Soundgarden was being compared to them".

about a label, which is Timbaland's label really, through Universal, that was going to essentially service this record to fans of his types of production. And they did the opposite. They pretty much just pushed it in front of all my fans first, and they wanted to see what would happen. So in the U.S. they took it to rock radio and rock & roll press and that was never going to work. In the UK they didn't really seem to blink at it, they just thought, OK, cool, new Chris Cornell record. But in the U.S. it was, he's lost his goddamn mind. And so that was kind of disappointing. I think had it come out this week there'd be less of that, 'cause times have changed and there's more integration in terms of different approaches to music and writing and production and all that crap.

Do you still stand by the album?

Oh, absolutely, I think it's a great album, I'm really glad I did it, and I also got a hell of a lot out of that experience. It was a crash course in a different way of songwriting and a different way of performing, and I think as a songwriter and also as a recording artist it's easy to get caught in a pattern. I recorded "Seasons" in a closet in 1990, I still have the mi-

crophone I used, it was just two acoustic guitar tracks and two vocal tracks, 'cause all I had was a four-track and that was the only way it was going to sound good. And I could have stopped there, I guess. [Laughs] It worked, it was fine! As time moved on it turns out I was just one of those guys who doesn't like to stop, I like to keep moving on and learning new things, and that's always been the goal of any band I've ever been in as well. The upside to that is that I've had a lot of creative output and artistically have had a ton of freedom to do whatever I want with really gracious fans that fucking put up with it. And the downside would be that the commercial side of one's career can suffer when it becomes super eclectic, and I think on some level mine has done that here and there.

At the Sonic Evolution concert in Seattle earlier this year you performed Mad Season songs with the existing members of the band, as well as a number of Temple of the Dog songs. At the end of the night, in reference to the Mad Season songs, Mike McCready said, "It's with a heavy heart to hear this music". Do you feel that way when you hear Temple of the Dog tracks?

I had a similar sentiment that was actually based more around the Mad Season songs. I think there's something about the Temple songs that always feels triumphant to me, and the reason I say that is because we were all really young, and as

far as I know, none of us had had anything like that happen to us – where someone young and really close to us, and who had such promise and was so inspiring as a songwriter and as a person, dies, needlessly, unexpectedly, and there's no way to characterise it in a positive way. There was no silver fucking lining to that happening ever. And yet, Temple kind of became this moment where we came together as friends in mourning and we created something that became timeless. And the experience of doing it was really great. There was no tension, there were no expectations for it commercially or otherwise, we were all enjoying each other's company as well as enjoying making the album together. I was having this great moment of taking songs I had written and seeing a completely different group of people approach them, and see what that could turn into, and it turned into an amazing thing.

And also Pearl Jam was forming [out of the ashes of Andrew Wood's band, Mother Love Bone] right around the time we were making the record, and it felt like that was a very big healing thing; to have Eddie [Vedder] come into the fold of this small group of friends and just somehow know that he was going to bring something creative into their lives. And that [band] that seemed like it was going to die and wither away suddenly had this huge spark, and our scene as friends and our scene as Seattle musicians went from one moment of mourning and this horrible, dour depression to hopefulness again. I think of that as a really triumphant moment that remembers a friend in the best possible way.

Having said that, doing the Mad Season songs and singing them was really difficult for me, 'cause I didn't know them. That wasn't an album I'd performed, I didn't know all the words. I'd heard the songs but I had to listen to the ones that I sang and learn them and then learn the lyrics. And what ended up happening was, I'm listening to Layne [Staley] singing them over and over and over, and it was so sad. It was so sad to hear his performances and hear his expression and kind of know where he was during that period, which wasn't great, and you hear this kind of vibrant talent, the character of who he really is coming through in the song, 'cause he was able to do that, he was able to convey that. It might have been the first time I really had to confront the fact that he's dead and he's not coming back. And I hadn't done that. And there's something about that feeling that is so familiar that it's fucking annoying. I've lost a lot of young, brilliant friends, people that I thought were very inspired. Andy Wood and Layne and Jeff Buckley, who was a good friend, and

Kurt [Cobain], and Shannon Hoon [of Blind Melon] was a friend, and Mike Starr [Alice In Chains] was a friend, the list can kind of go on if I sit here and try and remember. And they're all young and these guys all had limitless potential in their lives in front of them. And I think there's something so inspiring about that – that is like the miracle of youth. And to see that be the final chapter so young is a really hard thing to swallow every time.

Was there never a lesson to be learned from those deaths? You had your own substance issues in the Nineties and 2000s – was seeing these friends die not enough to scare everyone straight?

I remember seeing how Layne reacted to Andy dying from drugs, and I think that he was scared possibly. And I think he also reacted the same way when Kurt shot himself. They were really good friends. And yet it didn't stop him. But for me, if I think about the evolution of my life as it appears in songs for example, *Higher Truth* is a great example of a record I wouldn't have been able to write [when I was younger], and part of that is in essence because there was a period

In the title-track on the new album you sing "I'll take the truth, a higher truth". What does that mean to you?

I don't know if those words would even have come out of my mouth at a younger age. I was sort of afraid to write it down 'cause there are a lot of connotations to bullshit new agey crap that I've heard since the Eighties. The distant notion of a higher truth suggests that there's truth of a better form, and higher is better, and my connection with the thought of it has more to do with the connection to my children, and that lesson that you get when you're shaking a keyring in front of your baby's face and they're sitting in the crib and they're completely living in the moment and enthralled with this simple thing that is like the whole universe to them. And realising that really that's all life ever needs to be – lost in the wonder of whatever moment we're in, and if it isn't right in front of our face and we can't see it then maybe we're not looking hard enough. That's what higher truth means to me. The higher truth is really just the simple version of what we're like and how we feel about life when we come into the

world, instead of complicating it and corrupting it and getting swept away in all the bullshit of mysticism and religion and philosophy and vanity and all that crap. It's who we were before any of that happens.

Speaking of your children, your Instagram contains photos of your youngest son, Chris, playing guitar. Is he following in your footsteps?

I don't know, he's his own guy. He listens to a lot of different kinds of music, and I haven't really tried to push him in any one direction. I think my children are definitely musically inclined and they show it, and they're exposed to a lot of it. And they're their own people, and I think easily they could do something musical or they could do something in acting or film or other types of the arts, and I would fully support it.

What one piece of advice would you offer them if they wanted to go into music?

It has to be done for the right reason, and I'd say that to anybody. Obviously I want my kids to be happy, and I believe that they can be super successful at whatever they want to do, but don't make the successful part more important than the process of doing it. Especially if it's an artistic endeavour. Make sure that it's inspired, that's your chief goal, 'cause I also believe that success comes from that.

When you were starting out, was there anyone in particular who really encouraged you? Who saw something in you and said, "keep going"?

I got a lot of that encouragement from day one, whether it was said or whether

"I've lost a lot of young, brilliant friends. Andy Wood, Layne, Kurt, the list can go on."

of time there where I didn't expect to be here. And now not only do I expect to be here, and I'm not going anywhere, but I've had the last 12 years of my life being free of substances to kind of figure out who the substance-free guy is, because he's a different guy. Just by brain chemistry, it can't be avoided. I'm not the same, I don't think the same, I don't react the same. And my outlook isn't necessarily the same. My creative endeavours aren't necessarily the same. And one of the great things about that is it enabled me to kind of keep going artistically and find new places and shine the light into new corners where I hadn't really gone before. And that feels really good. But it's also bittersweet because I can't help but think, what would Jeff be doing right now, what would Kurt be doing right now, what would Andy be doing? Something amazing, I'm sure of it. And it would be some music that would challenge me to lift myself up, something that would be continually raising the bar so that I would work harder too, in the same way they affected me when they were alive basically.

I would just read the face of somebody. I was a pretty unremarkable kid. I had no focus, I was horrible in school, nobody seemed to give a crap about anything I was doing, no one seemed to be interested. Until I did music. I think that's when the switch was thrown. The first time I had a music teacher play a scale on piano and ask me to sing it, 'cause she just wanted to see if I had an ear or not, I remember singing the scale and she almost jumped off the stool and looked at me. I remember it because that's the first time that had happened. No one had ever looked at me like that. And the first time being in a rock band I started to feel it for sure, I was treated differently. In the early days of Soundgarden, just playing half-full dirty little clubs, people came up to us the whole time and said you guys have something really special.

Your parents divorced in your early teens. What role did music play in helping you deal with that?

Music was my escapism, and that has a lot to do with why I write songs the way I do. Because I still think of it that way. You're creating an environment with music that other people get to wander into when they listen to your music. And that was what I did when I listened to records; I would put on a record in my bedroom and close my eyes and get lost in whatever that world was. It was super important. I tended to shy away from the records that everyone was playing. I never bought a Rolling Stones record, I never bought a Led Zeppelin record until Soundgarden was being compared to them. Now I have all their records and I'm a huge fan. But there was a period growing up that I shied away from that. I wanted an environment in my bedroom of music that was different.

And you found that where?

In terms of looking outward for inspiration I was looking at the heroes I had that lived in the post-punk indie world, 'cause it was an amazing time. As dreary and shitty as the Eighties were for commercial music, there was a lot of underground music that was fantastic. It was the golden age of that. And the bands were from everywhere – the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland, Germany, Sweden, there were these indie bands on little labels that were making really amazing music. It was a bit of an "everything goes" kind of attitude that over time has faded a little bit, and I always wanted to stay in that "everything goes" world. So what I do now is, I'm always looking at guys who are ageing and still manage to have a vibrant career, and still manage to do things creatively that surprise, and yet they do it with authority and with some type of purpose that keeps

people interested. Neil Young is a great example of that. He's almost more frightening when he's onstage playing a rock song now than he was 25 years ago.

You left school at 15 – what were your prospects?

[Laughs] I had no plan, and there were no prospects. I started working. I was a busboy, I was a dishwasher, those were the jobs I could get, and that was it. Kind of simultaneously I started playing music, and I had a band pretty quickly. I started playing the drums. I couldn't play any other instrument at the time, but I had learned guitar and piano at a younger age and sort of let it go and forgot about it. So I started playing drums, and I was in a band within a week, and at 16, 17, somewhere in there, that was my plan.

By the time I was 19, I distinctly remember driving home from my restaurant job in my 1969 four door Galaxie 500, and having this kind of moment, it was like an epiphany. It occurred to me that there was no guarantee that as a musician I would ever have any kind of financial success, but I was fine with that. And on this drive I remember making a promise to myself that

“I was a pretty unremarkable kid. I had no focus, I was horrible in school.”

no matter what happened in terms of success, I was going to be one of those guys playing music until he drops dead. I had no trouble working, I always showed up on time and I was pretty industrious in that blue collar way, so that wasn't ever going to be a factor. To me, paying rent, having guitar strings, having gas in my tank, that wasn't that tough, it was just a matter of getting up early when you don't want to. And you take shit from the boss instead of kicking him in the teeth and getting fired. You make sacrifices for whatever it is you want, and I was able to do that, I was fine with that. So that was my promise.

And after that, things slowly but surely kept kind of evolving into what would become a successful music career. Nothing fast, no overnight anything, but I always felt that having that moment was really important, because it took any kind of desperation out of it. I was never going to be that guy who was thinking, I have to be a rock star next month or I'm going to be too old. [Laughs] I didn't think about it, I didn't care, I just cared about what we were doing artistically.

You seem comfortable reflecting on your past – your Twitter, for example, is full of archival shots. Is it because in tandem with that you're still moving forward with Soundgarden and as a solo artist?

I'm good with it now. That's never really been something I was that comfortable doing, mainly because I was always looking forward. And I guess two things happened. One was the *PJ20* movie [the documentary marking Pearl Jam's 20th anniversary] and being interviewed for that. I really had to stop and remember some things and how I felt and get into the moment. And then what really brought me back in a way I didn't expect was when we did the anniversary of *Superunknown*, 'cause we did a few shows where we played just that album from front to back, and we'd never done that before. So I'd never gone back to that moment of what it felt like in that year when I was sitting in a basement writing all these songs and obsessing over the album coming out good. That all came back. Music is like a time machine, it puts you back in a room literally where you remember what the carpet looked like, what time of day it was when you came up with a certain idea, and that did that for me.

You mention 'PJ20'. What can you recall of first meeting Eddie Vedder? Was it while working on Temple of the Dog?

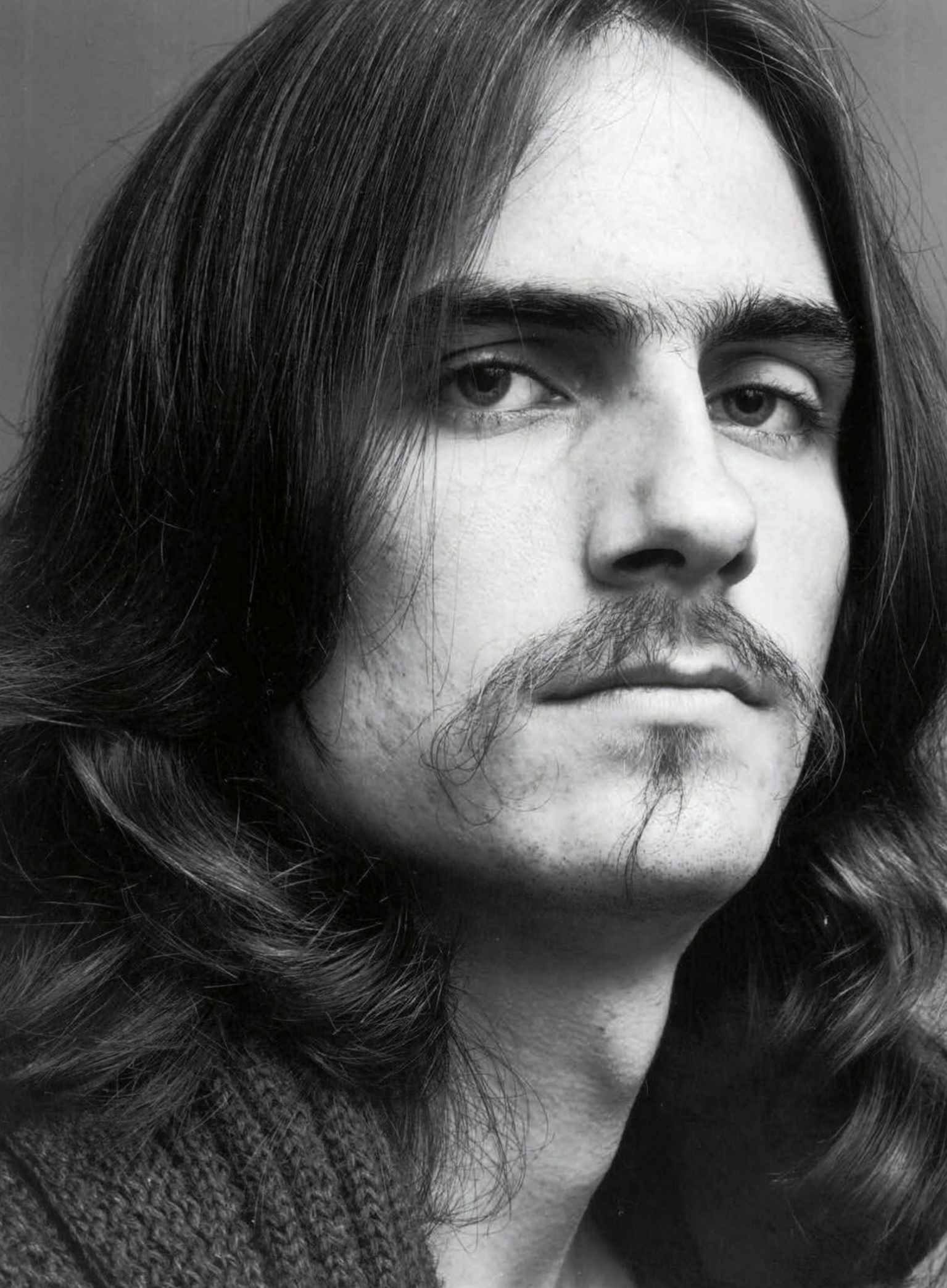
Yeah, there were two rehearsals I think we did for that, and the second one he was there, waiting for us to be finished so that they could do a Pearl Jam rehearsal. And at the time Matt [Cameron, drums] wasn't in Pearl Jam, so me and

Matt showed up and we just went through the songs once, and that was when I met him. And it was in that moment that he started singing on "Hunger Strike", just because I was singing both parts and he thought he'd just step up to the mic and help me out. And a lightbulb went off and I rearranged the song and put him in it, 'cause it wasn't really a song, it was one verse and then a revolving chorus, which I imagined would just end the album. And when we rearranged it and I sang the first verse and then had him sing and the band kind of come in it changed everything, and then it became a real song. Including him in that was also this kind of momentary leap of faith as well as it being in the spirit of the album. There was no ego involved, there was no stress, and the idea that this guy I didn't even know would suddenly be part of something that was that important to us, it didn't really bother me. I didn't react to it with any kind of possessiveness, we didn't have those feelings about it. And he was a great guy.

Another example of Seattle musicians collaborating was [Cont. on 105]



FLYING SOLO
Cornell's new album,
Higher Truth, is his
fourth solo studio
record.



My Life in 15 Songs James Taylor

Addiction, absent fathers and survival: The surprisingly dark stories behind some folk-rock classics

By Andy Greene

JAMES TAYLOR'S NEW ALBUM, 'Before This World', is his first collection of original songs in 13 years, though he wasn't exactly taking it easy during that stretch – he toured regularly, released live and cover albums, and helped raise twin boys, now 14. But a few years ago, Taylor realised that he needed to make songwriting a top priority in his life if he was ever going to release another album of new songs. So he borrowed a friend's apartment and camped out to write what would become *Before This World*, a sweet, reflective disc that evokes memories of his classic 1970s albums. "I'm not the type of musician who reinvents himself over and over again," he says. "I am a slow evolution of a style of recording and writing, and I do think that in ways I get better at it." ¶ At 67, Taylor is able to look back honestly on his life and career, including the darker mo-

ments – from his heroin addiction to his struggles as a parent (he fathered two children, Sally, 41, and singer-songwriter Ben, 38, with ex-wife Carly Simon). “Sally and Ben turned out brilliantly,” he says. “But I can’t take much credit for them. I was a pretty compromised father. Addiction is delayed development, so I may have been late in becoming an adult.”

Sitting in a luxury suite at Fenway Park before his beloved Boston Red Sox took on the New York Yankees one recent evening, Taylor walked us through 50 years of songwriting, going all the way back to getting signed to Apple Records by the Beatles in 1968.

Rainy Day Man 1967

In 1966, I was living at the Albert Hotel in New York with my best friend, Zach Wiesner, who wrote this song with me. We had one of two rooms at the hotel that hadn’t been destroyed in a fire, so it was pretty cheap.

The “rainy day man” was a dope connection. I had taken my first opiate in 1966. Joel “Bishop” O’Brien, the drummer in the Flying Machine, was an addict. I spent a lot of time at his apartment, so it was just a matter of time before I tried heroin. I was pretty much born to shoot dope – it was the key to my lock, so I really was gone for the next 20 years.

Something in the Way She Moves 1968

I spoke to my dad on the phone while I was living in New York, and he didn’t like the way I sounded. He was right: I was strung out, malnourished and kind of beat. He arrived the next day with the family station wagon and drove me back to North Carolina, where I had grown up. I took time to recover, and around Christmas 1967 I talked my parents into buying me a ticket to London, where I had a friend who agreed to put me up for a few weeks.

I was hoping to sing in clubs or even on the streets, but I ended up getting in touch with Peter Asher, who had just started working for Apple Records. He got me an audition with Paul McCartney and George Harrison, where I played them this song. Paul said to Peter, “You feel like producing this guy?” And Peter said, “Yeah.”

The song is about an early girlfriend and the calm you feel in the presence of someone who knows you really well. When I heard George Harrison used the title for the opening words of “Something”, I was thrilled. I didn’t feel like I was being poached at all – besides, “Something in the Way She Moves” quotes the Beatles’ “I Feel Fine”:

“She’s around me almost all the time/And I feel fine.”

Carolina in My Mind 1968

I was making my first album, at Trident Studios in London, just as the Beatles were recording the White Album nearby. I realised how lucky I was to be listening to the Beatles playbacks and watching their process in the studio, but at the same time that I was surrounded by this holy host of my absolute idols, I missed my home in North Carolina. This captured that feeling of being called away to another place.

Sweet Baby James 1970

Allen Klein took over Apple Records in 1969. We had it in our contract that we could audit him to see what our sales were, and he didn’t want anybody looking at the books, so he let us go. In fact, he let everybody on the label go except the Beatles.

I came back to the States and found out my brother Alex had had a kid. I decided to write a song for the baby boy, who was named after me. A little cowboy song. It starts as a lullaby, then the second half of the song – “the turnpike from Stockbridge to Boston...” – talks about what music means to me. It gets pretty spiritual by the end. I think it’s my best song.

Steamroller 1970

I came back from London with my heroin habit raging again, so I went to rehab. Well, it wasn’t rehab. It was a psychiatric facility in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. I’d been in a psychiatric hospital when I was 17, and I think that’s just what my folks knew to do with me. This facility wasn’t meant to handle opiate rehab, but that’s where I went, and I wrote a lot of songs that wound up on *Sweet Baby James* there.

“Steamroller”, however, was from my Flying Machine days, and it was a joke. There were a lot of white guys playing the blues, college students singing Howlin’ Wolf and Muddy Waters, and it seemed comical to me. “Steamroller” was just meant to be a takeoff.

One of the effects of being hospitalised a couple of times is that any expectations my family might have had for me – academic or professional – had all been abandoned. They kinda threw up their hands and said, “Well, at least he’s still alive.”

They were always very supportive of my music, but I did feel as though I came from a place of being disenfranchised and alienated. So while seeing *Sweet Baby James* take off was hugely gratifying and everything I wanted, success was a major adjustment.

You’ve Got a Friend 1971

Carole King and I were playing the Troubadour in Los Angeles together. She had just written “You’ve Got a Friend”, which she later said was a response to “Fire and Rain”. The chorus to “Fire and Rain” is “I’ve seen lonely times when I could not find a friend.” Carole’s response was, “Here’s your friend.” As soon as I heard it, I wanted to play it.

Not long after, we were in the studio recording [1971’s] *Mud Slide Slim and the Blue Horizon*. We had already cut two songs that day, but we still had studio time and a lot of energy. Peter [Asher] said, “Well, why don’t you play ‘You’ve Got a Friend’?” We did, and it sounded great.

There was just one problem: I hadn’t bothered to ask Carole if it was OK. I sheepishly called her up and said, “We didn’t really mean to do it, but we’ve recorded ‘You’ve Got a Friend’”, and she said, “Fine, go ahead, put it out”, which was remarkably generous.

Walking Man 1974

I wrote a lot of songs about my dad. It’s probably typical, but I have a sense that he was emotionally sort of frozen. “Walking Man” is informed by my longing for him. He disappeared for a few years when I was seven, eight and nine. He was drafted into the Navy, and then he volunteered to go to the South Pole. We missed him a lot. My mother was a daughter of a Yankee fisherman. She had five kids born within six years in the countryside of North Carolina, and here she was waiting for her husband to come home. That

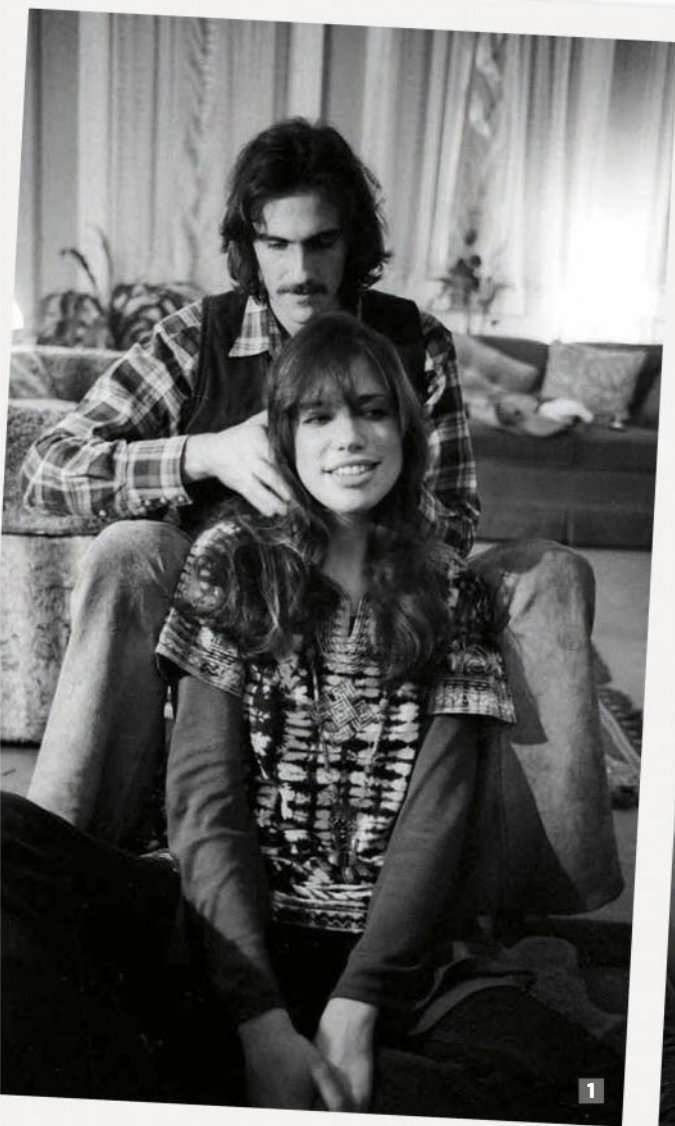
always stayed with me, somehow.

A Junkie’s Lament 1976

I’ve got a lot of recovery songs. This one’s a warning not to think of a junkie as a complete functioning human being. Heroin should’ve killed me about five times, but it never did. My kids suffered from their father being an addict. I think there’s no way they can’t. People take drugs to be in con-

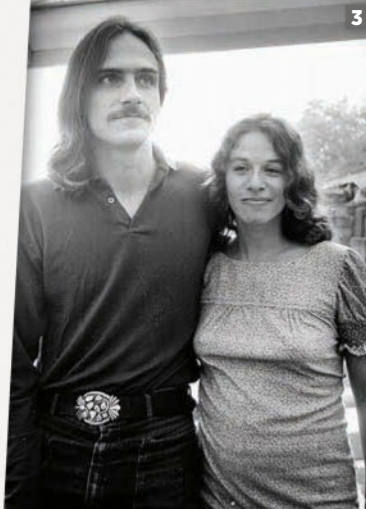
“I’ve got a lot of recovery songs. Heroin should have killed me about five times but it never did.”

ANDY GREENE wrote the feature on Bill Withers in RS 762.



You've Got Friends

(1) Taylor at home in New York with Carly Simon, 1971. (2) With John Lennon, 1977. (3) With Carole King, 1971, the year of "You've Got a Friend".



trol. They want to short-circuit any risk that they might take in life, any uncertainty, any anxiety. They just want to find the chemical route, to just push the button that gets the final result. So all of your relationships suffer, no question about it.

Secret o' Life 1977

I wrote this in a little patch of sunlight while sitting on the stairs of a house I was literally building on Martha's Vineyard. It took me about 10 minutes. It's as though the song was just sitting there in the guitar. There aren't many that come that easily.

One line goes, "The secret of life is enjoying the passage of time." It's a preposterous thing to write about, and so the title was supposed to recall Life Savers flavours – Pep-O-Mint or But-O-Rum. It's a jab at the presumptuousness of writing a song called "The Secret of Life".

Only a Dream in Rio 1985

I had gone into yet another rehab, to kick methadone after a couple of really nasty

"jackpots", which is where you humiliate yourself and the people who love you by fucking up. I tried to detox at a place in Connecticut, but I fell back and continued to use. It wasn't until [saxophonist] Michael Brecker got me involved with the Twelve Steps that I got serious. But even after I got clean, I didn't know whether there was life on the other side of addiction for me. I wasn't sure I could write anymore, either.

Then I went down to Rio de Janeiro to play the Rock in Rio festival. [Brazilian songwriter] Gilberto Gil had left a guitar for me to play. I walked onstage, and 300,000 people knew my songs. They have this tradition of singing along in Brazil that is so loud, so strong, and so in tune and so in time, it's sort of like when they pick up a song that they know and sing it back to you, it's extremely powerful. So I was, like, two feet off the ground coming off the stage, really felt as though I had landed on my feet. It was a turning point in my life.

Never Die Young 1988

This song is written from the point of view of someone who has given up and is looking at the lives of two young people who aren't caught up in the morass of life as the narrator knows it: "Let other hearts be broken/Let other dreams run dry/Let our golden ones sail onto another land beneath another sky." It's a sad song, but also hopeful and celebratory.

Copperline 1991

This is another song about home, about my father, about a childhood that was very peaceful, which is a rare thing today. I felt like I was part of a landscape in those days – the trees, the streams and the rivers, the animals that lived there.

[My wife] Kim and I are raising our kids in the countryside, but it is not the country life that I experienced. It's connected, constantly connected. Sometimes I feel as though the little snippets of information that we're always receiving are preparing us to have a hive mind. There may come a point where we basically have a communal mind, which is an exciting prospect.

Enough to Be on Your Way 1997

My brother Alex was also an addict, and in 1993, he died of it. There was a sense of relief when he died, for him and for his family, that one felt. It wasn't until a year or so had passed that I got back in touch with the totality of his life rather than just the shame of its end, the pain of it. That's when I wrote this song.

Mean Old Man 2002

This one was a big accomplishment, because it's a sophisticated song and a throwback. Paul McCartney called me up and said that when he'd first heard it, he assumed it was Frank Loesser or Cole Porter. I was, of course, absolutely thrilled. At one point, Bob Dylan told me that he'd been listening to [Taylor's song] "Frozen Man" and really thought it was great, and that's enough for me. Ten critics can savage me, but I'll be fine as long as every once in a while, someone like Bob Dylan or Paul McCartney says, "Keep going, kid."

Angels of Fenway 2015

I finished this in May 2014, but I had the music for about seven years before that. I knew that I wanted to write about this miracle 2004 season against the Yankees. If you're a Red Sox fan, or even just a baseball fan, it was an amazing event. I cast it as a grandmother who was born the last time the Red Sox won, and she dies on the day they finally do it again.

A journey into one of the most remote
and dangerous countries in the world

YEMEN'S HIDDEN WAR

BY MATTHIEU AIKINS

Photographs by Sebastiano Tomada

DAWN IS JUST BREAKING ON JUNE 5TH AT DJIBOUTI'S INTERNATIONAL airport, but it's already boiling hot on the tarmac. Mohammed Issa, a rotund and mustachioed border-police officer, gestures to a massive U.S. Air Force transport jet – a grey C-17 Globemaster – sitting a short distance away. “Since the start of the war in Yemen, it's been crazy here,” he says. “Military flights, humanitarian aid – sometimes there's no space to park on the tarmac.” ¶ Djibouti is a tiny state of citrus-coloured shacks and goat-lined boulevards tucked into a barren, volcanic stretch of the Horn of Africa. It sits astride the narrow straits that lead to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, and is home to the U.S.'s only permanent military base in Africa, Camp Lemonnier, linchpin of one of the Obama administration's most secretive and controversial programs: the drone-based campaign of surveillance and assassination against Al Qaeda and its allies in Somalia and Yemen. ¶ Yemen, an impoverished, restive nation of





The old city of Sana'a after a Saudi airstrike destroyed several homes

27 million on the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula has, in particular, been the focus of extensive counterterrorism efforts since the deadly attack on the *USS Cole* in 2000. Its branch of Al Qaeda has hatched some of the most dangerous plots against the United States, including the so-called Underwear Bomber, who tried to take down a commercial jet over Detroit with explosives in his boxer shorts. The Obama administration assassinated its first U.S. citizen, the fiery propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki, in Yemen's arid badlands. American special-operations forces have spent years training Yemeni counterterrorism units. In his speech unveiling his plan to combat ISIS last September, Obama held up Yemen as an example of where the U.S. had "successfully pursued" his counterterrorism strategy.

That strategy has now completely unravelled, as Yemen has become the latest country in the Middle East to descend into a full-fledged civil war. In March, after Houthis rebels seized control of the government, a coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia, which accuses the Houthis of being supported by its archrival Iran, launched a U.S.-supported campaign of airstrikes and imposed a land, air and sea blockade of the country – which it says is necessary to keep out Iranian weapons.

Four months of bitter fighting later, the Houthis control even more territory. And the conflict has pushed this already impoverished country to the brink of a massive humanitarian catastrophe, with the aid community warning of an impending famine if the blockade is not lifted. More than 3,700 Yemenis have died, nearly half of them civilians, and more than 1.25 million have been displaced from their homes.

Meanwhile, Al Qaeda has taken advantage of the chaos to seize wide swaths of eastern Yemen, including the port city of Mukalla, and has called for new attacks against the U.S. ISIS has gained a foothold and launched car-bomb attacks in the capital. Forced to evacuate its embassy and 125 special-operations advisers, the U.S. found its counterterrorism strategy in shambles, with many of the weapons and equipment it supplied to Yemen reported to be in the hands of militias.

MATTHIEU AIKINS is the *Schell Fellow* at the *Nation Institute*. He wrote about *ISIS* and *Iraq's* civil war in *March*.

"The coalition campaign in Yemen has devastating consequences for the U.S. counterterrorism strategy," says April Longley Alley, an analyst with the International Crisis Group. "They can continue to whack-a-mole with drone strikes, but the threat has become much deeper and more complicated over the long term."

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE war, Saudi Arabia has been preventing journalists from boarding the few humanitarian flights and ships it allows into Yemen, which is

DEADLY PASSAGE

The crew that helped the author and the photographer sneak past Saudi patrols



IF I WANTED TO GET INTO YEMEN BY SEA, I WOULD HAVE TO FIND A SMUGGLER WILLING TO RUN THE NAVAL BLOCKADE.

otherwise cut off from the world by the coalition blockade. I arrive in Djibouti in the hopes of finding a refugee or cargo boat that could take me there, but the news is bad. The Djiboutian government, I'm told, at the behest of the Saudi coalition, has recently started vetting even small commercial vessels. If my photographer and I want to get in by sea, we will have to find a smuggler willing to run the naval blockade in a speedboat.

The boat we find is seven metres long and made of fiberglass, with a low, dagger-shaped hull, and looks a little flimsy for a 210-kilometre crossing of the Bab al Mandab strait. As we leave the port, an American military speedboat loops by to take a look at us, and my photographer and I slouch below the low gunwales. Once we are out to sea, our captain, whom I'll call Yousuf, relaxes. Like many of the fishermen who plied the coastal waters of the Horn of Africa, he is used to taking unusual cargo. In past years, he has taken Ethio-

pian migrants, crammed in 30 or more at a time, on this route and deposited them clandestinely on the Yemeni shore, to continue their harrowing journey in search of work in the wealthy petro-monarchies of the Persian Gulf. "They don't know enough to be afraid," he says.

Over the horizon to our starboard is the port of Aden, which had once been the capital of an independent South Yemen, before the nation was reunited in 1990 under Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh had been a key U.S. ally and had supported the drone program in return for aid, but he was toppled in 2011 by protests during the Arab Spring, by demonstrators who demanded the same things as those in Cairo and Damascus: an end to economic stagnation and corruption, and the unaccountable, repressive institutions that sustained the region's strongmen.

For a moment, Yemen seemed like an Arab Spring success story. Saleh's relatively peaceful departure was brokered by the U.N., Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council. In the aftermath of the agreement, Saleh's vice president, Abdu Rabbu Mansur Hadi, ran unopposed for president and won. But the hopes of 2011 gradually faded as the country's political elites dallied and squabbled in the capital, Sana'a. Under Hadi's ineffectual reign, corruption and the economy worsened.

Meanwhile, the Houthis, a band of militia fighters based in the northern province of Saada, grew more and more powerful.

Over the past few years, as Yemen's political order collapsed from infighting, the Houthis expanded their territory through a combination of political bargains and military victories, entering Sana'a last September and finally putting Hadi under house arrest in January. The next month, he escaped to Aden, where, backed by Saudi funding and weapons, he declared a new temporary capital. The Houthis marched into the south, Hadi fled to Riyadh, and the Saudi-led bombing campaign and blockade began.

As night falls, the boat's passage kicks up a glowing trail of phosphorescent algae in the dark and muggy sea. Yousuf can still navigate using the lights of the shoreline, but it doesn't seem wise to try to enter the rebel-held port at night in the middle of a civil war. We decide to anchor in the lee of a small island, and we bob gently for a few hours, watching a distant lighted procession of tankers and contain-

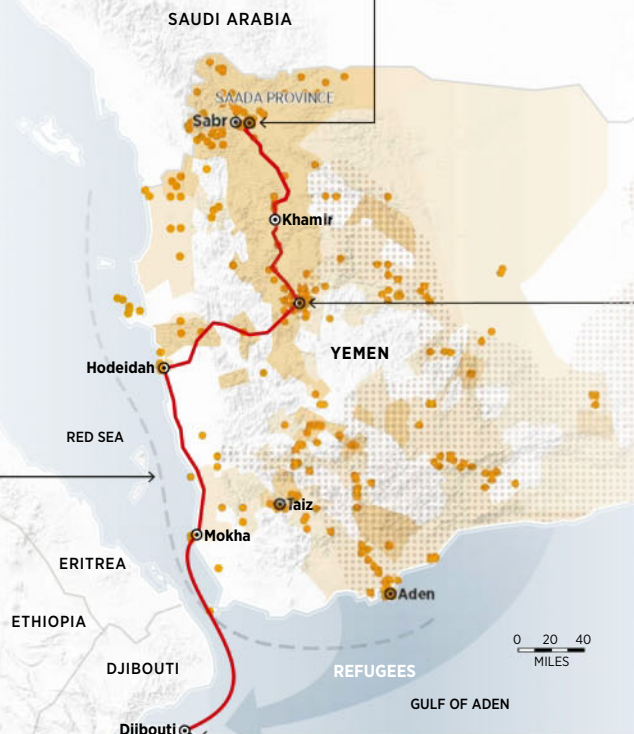
THE CRISIS IN YEMEN

When civil war erupted in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, fearing the rise of rebels sympathetic to its rival Iran, intervened; now, the conflict threatens to further destabilise the war-torn region.

Author's Route
Houthi control or influence
Houthi operate
Al Qaeda operates
Saudi airstrikes

SAUDI NAVAL BLOCKADE

To prevent Iranian aid from reaching Houthi rebels, Saudi Arabia has imposed a de-facto blockade of the remote country. Now, four months later, with over a million displaced, a full-on humanitarian disaster is underway.



SAADA CITY

A Houthi stronghold on the front line of the conflict; the Saudis have declared it a "military target", and scores of civilians have been killed.

SANA'A

The capital, regularly bombed by the Saudis, who target homes, killing civilians and massively damaging the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

U.S. CAMP LEMONNIER

Djibouti is home to the lone permanent U.S. military base in Africa, and a linchpin in the campaign against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.



er ships steaming through the channel toward the Suez Canal.

Near dawn, we weigh anchor and set off again through choppy seas. The rising sun is obscured by a scrim of haze hanging over the highlands to the east as we approach the small port city of Mokha. The driver of a passing skiff smuggling gasoline has warned us there were airstrikes the night before, but we find a scene of calm activity at the pier. Teenage-looking Houthi fighters with battered Kalashnikovs take us to a weary but friendly civil servant; with assent, he stamps our passports and welcomes us to Yemen.

Our fixer has come down from Sana'a to pick us up, and we begin the long journey north to the capital in the mountains. There is a fuel shortage because of the blockade, and the highways are empty of traffic. In the port of Hodeidah, the breakdown in public services is apparent as we drive through puddles of raw sewage and around mounds of trash piled high in the roundabouts. There has been little or no electricity for months, and in the sweltering June nights, people have taken to sleeping in the streets, where they risk catching dengue fever from the mosquitoes – a major outbreak of the virus has hit coastal Yemen, with more than 8,000 cases reported in Aden alone.

It is night by the time we reach Sana'a. The capital lies in the bowl of mountains at more than 2,100 metres, and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities on Earth. In the age of camel caravans, it was

a trading entrepôt between West and East, and was famous for the rich incenses and perfumes coveted in the temples of ancient Rome. Yemen's diaspora of merchants has spread around Africa and Asia, including the construction magnate Mohammed bin Laden, whose son Osama would be raised in his adopted homeland of Saudi Arabia.

In happier times, Yemen's warm, traditional society has been a magnet for adventure-minded tourists, and its fanciful old cities, whose multistory mud houses have been dubbed the "world's first skyscrapers", are UNESCO-listed World Heritage Sites. Now, however, blockaded and bombarded, the capital was in utter darkness, broken only by our headlights and the lamps wielded by Houthi fighters at checkpoints.

SAUDI ARABIA AND YEMEN MIGHT be likened to the U.S. and Mexico. Deep economic and cultural ties between the two countries have been strained by smuggling and illegal immigration, even as Saudi Arabia is home to a substantial population of Yemeni workers. And like the U.S. in Latin America, Saudi Arabia has always envisioned a right to intervene in the internal affairs of its poorer southern neighbour, based on its own national security. Though there is little evidence of direct Iranian military support for the Houthis, Saudi Arabia's Sunni monarchy has been increasingly concerned with a perceived Shiite threat from Iran, especially in the wake of its successful nuclear negotiations with the U.S.

"This war overall has less to do with Yemen and more to do with Saudi Arabia's obsession with Iran's rise in the region," says Farea al-Muslimi, a Yemeni political analyst and a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Middle East Center. "It has to do with a regional message, especially from the Saudis to the U.S.: We don't need you, we can take the lead in our own war."

On March 25th, the Saudis launched Operation Decisive Storm. Its name wasn't the only thing that seemed torn from a Bush-era playbook. They had assembled a coalition of the willing, which included the wealthy Gulf states of the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain – who, like the Saudis, were flush with U.S. and Western military equipment – as well as Egypt and unlikelier add-ons like Sudan and Morocco. The coalition contributed a handful of aircraft, but the majority was from the Saudi air force.

The Saudis' goal had been to force the Houthis to withdraw from Sana'a and return Hadi to power, but it was unclear how air power alone would achieve that, as the rebels continued their advance across the country, pushing into oil-rich Marib Province and capturing Al Anad air base, where U.S. special forces had been stationed. On April 21st, the Saudi military declared that Decisive Storm's mission had been accomplished, claiming that the threat from ballistic missiles and heavy weapons captured by the Houthis had been neutralised. (On June 6th, the Houthis fired their first Scud missile at Saudi Arabia.) Next, the Sau-

dis launched Operation Renewal of Hope, whose objectives included “protecting civilians”.

Meanwhile, the bombing and fighting across Yemen escalated. On an almost daily basis, the rumble of jets filled the air above Sana'a. Houthi anti-aircraft gunners would start firing – the jets flew so high that it was unclear what they were hoping to accomplish, and their shells would often land and cause casualties in the city – followed by the heavy explosions of airstrikes. The bombing did succeed in destroying much of Yemen's military and government infrastructure that the Houthis had captured. The Yemeni air force was wiped out, and the results of the U.S.'s train-and-equip program – worth \$500 million since 2007 – vanished as security forces abandoned their posts or joined warring militias. On May 27th, the Saudis flattened the Special Security Force base in Sana'a, which had been home to the U.S.-funded and -trained Counterterrorism Unit.

By the time we arrive, however, the Saudis have been targeting individual houses in and around the densely packed capital, which, no matter how exact American precision-guided technology might be, leads inevitably to civilian death. In one early-morning strike against the house of one of President Saleh's relatives that I visited on June 13th, five members of a single family were killed when one of the bombs overshot its target by six metres and landed in front of their home.

As a result of the conflict, Yemen was splitting into north and south. Even as the Houthis consolidated their grip on Sana'a, by mid-July Saudi-backed Yemeni militiamen and armoured vehicles from the Emirates had helped pro-Hadi forces establish a foothold in Aden. On July 16th, a delegation of exiled ministers flew back to the shattered southern city to prepare to establish a rival capital.

Meanwhile, as civilian casualties mount and Al Qaeda thrives on the chaos, the Obama administration is facing a dilemma of its own. American officials have warned that the U.S. counterterrorism strategy has suffered a setback in Yemen. “Al Qaeda is controlling an important port city, and their safe haven is unmolested by coalition airstrikes,” says Alley of the Crisis Group. “It's quite clear that in many Western governments, there's a growing discomfort with the war.”

For now, the American government continues to support the campaign by providing aerial refuelling, intelligence support and targeting assistance. Four of the wealthy Gulf states involved – Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE – are

home to key U.S. military bases and are participating in the campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. “For the U.S., Yemen is just not that important, especially when you have bigger issues like wrapping up the Iranian nuclear negotiations,” says Alley. “The Saudis have brought significant weight to bear on pressuring their allies to support them. Why cross them and create tension?”

SINCE THE HOUTHIS TOOK OVER Sana'a, their five-line slogan has become ubiquitous, affixed at checkpoints and chanted at noisy political rallies:

*God is great
Death to America
Death to Israel
A curse upon the Jews
Victory to Islam*

“WHEREVER THERE IS UNITED STATES INTERFERENCE, THERE IS AL QAEDA,” SAYS ONE REBEL. “IT’S TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.”

With their echo of the Iranian revolutionaries' infamous battle cry, the Houthis – who call themselves Ansar Allah, or Partisans of God – have presented an increasingly vexing enigma to the United States. They are often portrayed as a sectarian Shiite militia and combatants in a larger proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia that's taking place in Iraq and Syria. In an op-ed in *The New York Times* in April, Hadi, the exiled Saudi-backed president, warned that the Houthis were “puppets of the Iranian government”, a threat to the region's shipping lanes and “destined to become the next Hezbollah”.

In Western media, the conflict has been cast in sectarian tones, with the shorthand reference, as the same newspaper's editorial board put it in early July, to “an indigenous Shiite group allied with Iran”. The truth is far more complex and grounded in Yemen's highly diverse society and tangled politics. For example, the Houthis are actually Zaydi Shiites, which is a different sect from Iranian Twelver Shiism, and closer in doctrine and tradition to Yemen's Sunni majority.

At a hotel in downtown Sana'a, I meet with Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, a senior Houthi official and member of Ansar Allah's political committee. A short, broad-shouldered man with close-cropped stub-

ble, Bukhaiti moves around the capital with a Kalashnikov and two bodyguards. A longtime political activist against Saleh's regime, he had spent years in exile in Canada and is quick to reminisce about its fast-food chains and friendly people. He is unapologetic, though, about Ansar Allah's anti-American ideology, which holds U.S. imperialism responsible for much of the Middle East's troubles. “Look what happened in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and now Yemen,” he says. “Wherever there is U.S. interference, there is Al Qaeda and ISIS. It's to their advantage.”

The Houthis' philosophy both looks back to Islam's original Sunni-Shia schism in the seventh century A.D. and forward to a contemporary global opposition to U.S. dominance that includes an admiration for Latin American leftism. “We should repeat the experience of the people of South America,” he says. “They enlightened themselves about the danger of American policy.”

When I point out that Ansar Allah's slogan is anti-Semitic, Bukhaiti insists that they are not against Jews as a people, but Israel's treatment of Palestinians. “If we were around during the time of the Nazis, we would support the Jews,” he says.

The mixture of Islamism and Che Guevara is clearly influenced by the radical ideology of the Iranian

Revolution, and Ansar Allah has warm relations with Iran and the other militant groups it supports, as Bukhaiti openly acknowledges. “Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah – what unites us is that we are against American imperialism. It's not something that we hide. We're proud of it.” But he denies that they receive material support from Iran, or are in any way indebted to them: “We will never allow Iran to come here and use Yemen against any other country.”

The Houthis are not a monolithic group, and during the National Dialogue Conference in 2013, which was supposed to determine Yemen's new political order, they advanced a surprisingly liberal agenda, one that supported limited women's rights and placed Islamic law as only one of the sources for legislation. But their critics see them returning to their core identity as a militia in response to the pressures of war, especially in the wake of the assassinations of Houthi intellectuals like Ahmad Sharafeddin, killed on his way to the National Dialogue's final plenary session. “The problem is not that [the Houthi delegates] weren't genuine but that they were powerless,” says the Carnegie Center's Muslimi.

The Houthis see themselves as the only party in Yemen that has been truly committed to and effective in battling Al



NO END IN SIGHT

(1) Saudi-led airstrikes have led to mass destruction. (2) Bukhaiti, a rebel leader, with his bodyguards: "What unites us is that we are against American imperialism." When Saleh (3) was replaced by Hadi (4) as president, there was hope for reform, but the country descended into chaos.



4



3



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Qaeda. Bukhaiti points out that both the former Saleh regime and the Saudis have had ambiguous relationships with Sunni jihadists, seeking to use them for their own ends. He tries to portray Ansar Allah's takeover as defensive in nature: "If we withdraw from the South now, Al Qaeda will fill the vacuum."

At their office in Sana'a, I visit Radyha al-Mutawakel and Abdulrasheed al-Faqih, a married couple who run Mwatana, one of the few independent and active human rights nongovernmental organisations in Yemen. They are both diminutive and gentle-mannered, and finish each other's sentences in their soft voices; they expect any day that Ansar Allah might arrest them or shut them down. Mwatana had documented the abuses that the Houthis had suffered under Saleh's counterinsurgency

war; now, the tables are turned, with Amnesty International accusing the militia of torturing protesters in an attempt to suppress any opposition. "Once the Houthis took power, they became the main source of violations," says Mutawakel. "They are doing extrajudicial detentions and attacking media and civil society."

Since the start of the war, Ansar Allah has raided a number of media outlets and NGOs, particularly ones connected to its principal rival, the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Opposing politicians have also been arrested and held without charge. Yemen's judicial system has largely broken down, and those detained by the Houthis lack any access to due process. "Anyone who speaks out against the Houthis, they take him," says Faqih. "The worst might be yet to come."

THE MAIN REASON WHY Saudi Arabia views Yemen as such a vital strategic interest – and its Achilles' heel – is the 1,770-kilometre border between the two countries, which stretches over remote and mountainous terrain. Saada Province, on the Yemeni side, is the Houthis' traditional stronghold, and since the start of the war, fighting between Ansar Allah and the Saudi army has escalated. "They're a big challenge to the Saudis militarily," says Muslimi. "The Houthis have nothing to lose. They can send thousands of people to the borders to die."

The Saudis have responded by intensively bombing and shelling northern Yemen. On May 8th, in a move reminiscent of the U.S.'s "free-fire zones" in Vietnam, Saudi Arabia declared the cities of Sadaa and Marran to be "military targets" and reportedly dropped leaflets warning the entire civilian population to leave by 7 p.m. that evening.

Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have accused Saudi Arabia of violating international humanitarian law. "The strikes killing civilians, in which there was no apparent military target, show at least a cruel indifference," says Belkis Wille of Human Rights Watch. "Bomb attacks that deliberately or recklessly targeted civilians would amount to war crimes." (A representative at the Saudi embassy in Washington, D.C., did not respond to a request for comment.)

Yet there was little news from Saada; no Western journalists had visited since the start of the war. Even the Red Cross had to temporarily abandon its office there. The only foreigners left were a medical team from Doctors Without Borders (also known by its French initials as MSF) that was holed up in a hospital in Saada City.

Getting there meant driving the highway 185 kilometres north from the capital, through arid mountains with bright-green irrigated valleys slashed through them. Saada has long been one of the most traditional parts of Yemen, and the villages here are built like fortresses from the mud they sit on, with three-storey crenellated towers and slitted turrets that stand watch over verdant fields of khat, the popular local stimulant.

Once we reach the border of Saada Province, every few kilometres we encoun-

ter a charred hulk by the side of the road, or a massive crater that forces us to divert into the fields around it. Saudi jets have been targeting vehicles travelling the highway. Most of the recognisable wrecks are oil tankers or heavy trucks, but others are clearly ordinary vehicles – we pass a blasted flatbed with dozens of little dead goats scattered around it, and another damaged, abandoned pickup that is loaded with sacks of onions. The checkpoints here are mostly deserted – many bear damage from airstrikes – and the few vehicles we cross on the road are driving as fast as they can. From time to time, we can hear the rumble of a jet somewhere high above us.

When we arrive in Saada City, the devastation becomes apparent. On the deserted main road, two thin lanes have been cleared in the rubble and dust. On each side is a long stretch of shattered apartments and shops, their metal shutters crumpled like discarded tissue paper. Other buildings have been flattened by bomb strikes, their concrete floors pancaking down. We turn a corner and head into the old section of the city, where elaborate mud houses have been pulverised. Skirting a massive crater in front of the 1,200-year-old Imam al-Hadi mosque – it is deep enough to swallow a city bus – we pull into al-Jumhuri Hospital.

The hospital is a relative safe haven in Saada due to the presence of the MSF team, who had arrived in May. “They won’t target us because of the foreigners,” says Mohammad Hajjar, the hospital’s director, a tall man with a permanently creased brow. When the bombing started, much of the hospital’s staff fled, but Hajjar had remained behind with a small crew, bolstered by volunteers. Outside of the city, the public-health system in Saada has largely collapsed, with the U.N. rating Saada as the only province in Yemen that was “impossible or nearly impossible” to access.

The MSF team has set up two big overflow tents in the courtyard outside the ER; the week before we arrived, they had treated around 200 patients. “I’ve never seen what I’ve seen here,” says Maria Green, an Argentine nurse who was the medical team’s leader. She and her colleagues have been working nonstop since arriving and have barely slept from the constant airstrikes at night, some of them in close proximity to the compound. She has treated victims from the wars in Syria and the Central African Republic, but has found the results of modern air power shocking.



1



2

“The kind of trauma you get from explosions – patients are coming in destroyed,” she says, “and they all come at once.”

The hospital is short on nearly everything, especially anesthetic. Even if they can get to Sana’a, medical supplies are drying up as the blockade wears on. For example, Hajjar tells me they have been surprised by a surge in snakebite victims; the bombings are so fierce that serpents swarm out of the ground, or else people encounter them when they flee their homes for the forest and caves. Hospital staff searched for antivenom in Sana’a but were able to find only five vials. “We are in a terrible situation,” Hajjar says. “If the Saudis could blockade the air we breathe, they would.” He says the hospital only has about 10 days of fuel left, and without it, its generators and intensive-care machines will stop. “We’ve had three fuel tankers try to deliver, and they’ve all been attacked on the road and destroyed,” he says.

CASUALTIES OF WAR

(1) MSF doctors treating a civilian in Saada. Humanitarian groups have suggested the Saudis may be guilty of war crimes. (2) Houthi fighters on patrol. (3) More than a million civilians have fled their homes; IDP camps have sprung up, but disease and hunger plague the refugees.



3

At the hospital, I meet Fatehi Betal, who is part of a local Houthi-affiliated civil council that is documenting the airstrikes. His family fled when the bombing started and their home had been reduced to rubble. A 24-year-old with rimless glasses and a tense expression that occasionally breaks into a youthful smile, Betal shows me the notes and photos that he has accumulated. According to his count, 341 civilians have been killed in the province since the start of the war. “Saada is different from other cities in Yemen,” he says.

"They target any gathering. We can't even pray in the mosque."

Leaving the safe confines of the hospital, Betal takes me on a macabre tour of the city's destruction. Saada's old souk, once packed with spice and textile sellers, is half-destroyed and empty except for stray dogs lying forlornly where the butcher shops had once been. We visit a car sales lot filled with charred wrecks, a blasted water bottling factory, and cratered restaurants and shopping plazas. Betal shows us the casing of a cluster bomb, and a half-exploded 1,000-pound bomb, both made in the U.S. The post office, central bank and cell-phone network have been wiped out. Almost all the petrol stations in Saada have been hit; at the Jarman station, there is a long line of incinerated vehicles. An airstrike had hit it while drivers were lined up for petrol. "Nineteen people were killed, some burned beyond recognition," he says.

According to a U.N. satellite analysis, 1,171 structures in Saada City had been damaged or destroyed by airstrikes as of May 17th. The pattern of targets suggests that Saudi Arabia was focusing on Saada's infrastructure in an attempt to destroy its economy and flush out its civilian population.

I am told by the hospital staff that things are even worse in the rural border areas. The same day that we arrive at the hospital, there is news that there has been a strike in Radha, a remote village several hours away by road. Sure enough, that afternoon a procession of pickups screech into the hospital compound. The medical staff wheel up stretchers and pull bloodied figures out of the trucks. Soon there are bright-red spatters on the clean emergency-room floor as the hospital staff prepare patients for the operating theatre. I ask a man leaning wearily against the back of a pickup, his clothes stained with his uncle's dried blood, what has happened.

"It was just after lunch, and people were leaving their houses," the man, Saleh Khairan, says. "There was a huge cluster bomb. We heard hundreds of explosions. They must have hit 50 houses, and at least one person from each house was killed or injured."

With petrol so scarce, Khairan had been forced to pay a driver \$350 to make the three-and-a-half-hour drive to Saada City, an expense the family can scarcely afford. "We're too poor to leave," he says. "There are no military bases near us or anything. This was the first time we've been attacked in this war, but they've been using cluster bombs in the surrounding areas."

We drive out to the village of Sabr, about a half-hour outside the city, where hospital officials have told us one of the worst civilian-casualty incidents had occurred. The countryside we pass through is lush – Saada is known as the fruit basket of Yemen – but the fields and mud houses we pass look deserted. "It's mostly shepherds left," says Betal.

Sabr was an austere cluster of mud homes, some of them elaborate three-storey forts. Half of it had been reduced to churned rubble. Two older residents, dressed in long robes and shawls, join us and tell us what had happened.

"I'VE NEVER SEEN WHAT I'VE SEEN HERE," SAYS A NURSE WHO'S TREATED VICTIMS FROM WARS IN SYRIA AND AFRICA.

On June 3rd, they say, an airstrike had hit several houses. Then, as the villagers worked to free victims from their collapsed homes, another wave of strikes had hit them. Betal arrived in an ambulance; he says the locals were hysterical and afraid to go back to try to rescue anyone. In all, they say, eight houses had been destroyed and 51 people killed. They produce a list of names with ages next to them – 36 of the victims were children. "These are their homes," Salem Ali says, pointing to the rubble. "My father's house is there." They claim there were no Houthi fighters or military targets in the village. "We don't know why they attacked us," he says.

It is impossible to verify their figures independently, but the MSF team confirm that there had been a large number of injured and killed who were brought to the hospital from the bombing in Sabr, their biggest incident to date, including eight children, many of them victims of asphyxiation or trauma from being trapped under the rubble.

As we speak, the recurring rumble of a Saudi jet grows louder and louder. It seems to be making circles over the valley, searching for targets. I imagine how we'd look from one of those infrared-camera videos they always play on TV: several pickup trucks full of men converge in a village and congregate together in some sort of meeting. Everyone looks suspicious as a ghostly infrared silhouette on those bomb-camera videos, and their evaporation in a white flash at the end feels justified and even satisfying.

The sound of the plane is excruciating. "I guess you must be used to hearing the

sound of the jets all day," I say to the men, trying to sound lighthearted. "I'm not, so it really makes me nervous."

"Normally, we would run away when we hear it this close," Ali replies, "but you are here with us and we don't want to make you afraid."

EVEN BEFORE THE WAR, MANY YEMENIS lived in precarious poverty. About half the population lacked access to clean water, and the country imported 90 per cent of its food from abroad. But the outbreak of heavy fighting, and in particular the blockade, has pushed them into a genuine humanitarian disaster. In June, the U.N. raised Yemen's crisis status to Category 3, its highest level, shared only by Syria, South Sudan and Iraq. And yet since the beginning of the conflict, the U.N. and the rest of the humanitarian community have struggled to deliver aid.

On our way back from Saada, we stop in Khamir, a small town set amid the rolling hills two hours north of the capital. Much of Saada's population has escaped to neighbouring areas like this, part of a mass exodus of Yemeni civilians who have fled their homes and are desperately in need of assistance.

At the district hospital, I walk through the pediatric ward with Emmanuel Berbain, a French doctor who is part of a long-running MSF project here. In contrast to the mad urgency of the hospital in Saada, the ward has a funereal air, as black-robed, veiled mothers keep a silent vigil over the patients – there is nothing more somber than a roomful of silent children.

"Malnutrition is one of the side effects of the war and the blockade," Berbain says, examining a small boy who looks deflated from severe diarrhoea. The influx of internally displaced persons, or IDPs, to Khamir means a surge in preventable illnesses: "Leishmaniasis, malaria, rickets."

In Yemen's traditional society, many IDPs are able to find shelter with their extended families, and others have been accommodated in government facilities like schools. Some, though, are simply on their own. Berbain and I jump into an MSF van and ride out to the edge of town, to an area known as the Khat Market, though it is just a series of barren, stepped fields overlooking the town. It is scattered with tents pitched on the open ground, some of them muddy old U.N. Refugee Agency shelters from past conflicts, others just tarps on sticks. "They basically have nothing. No food, no water," Berbain says. The U.N. hasn't shown up. A note of disbelief entered his voice. [Cont. on 105]

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Foals' Play for the Big Time



Illustration by JAMES FOSDIKE

Bigger is better as indie rockers' steady upward trajectory shoots skywards



Foals

What Went Down Warner

★★★★★

BY ANNABEL ROSS

When Florence + the Machine stepped up to headline Glastonbury this year, Foals were asked to fill their penultimate slot. They said no. For one, frontman Yannis Philippakis said he'd been smoking too many cigarettes. Secondly, the band hadn't rehearsed the new material enough, and didn't want to have to rely on the old songs.

The timing of Foals' fourth album, released at the end of the European summer, is slightly off for the London-via-Oxford quintet, but you can be sure that by December, when they perform at Falls Festival, they'll have the new stuff down pat. For *What Went Down* – even more so than 2013's *Holy Fire* – is a record made for festivals, furthering Foals' progression from a mathrocky indie concern to that rarest of things – a headline act with mass appeal, without ever kowtowing to commercialism.

The album's first two tracks have already been released as singles, and as on *Holy Fire* Foals aren't coy about showing their weapons early. "What Went Down" is gargantuan. An organ announces its epic intent, and Philippakis' urgent, tobacco-worn vocals usher in an astral cacophony of a chorus; impellent percussion, distorted

guitars and the screams of a man on the verge of madness. "When I see a man I see a liar! You're the apple of my eye of my eye of my eye I want you!" The song winds down, then builds up and explodes again, a tactic employed to surprisingly consistent effect across the record.

If "What Went Down" makes a jugular play for hugeness, "Mountain At My Gates" assures us it won't overwhelm their idiosyncrasies. The arpeggiating guitars, the counterpoint rhythms, the unexpected little bridges – they're all there. They've just turned the dial up to 100, and with the help of producer James Ford (Arctic Monkeys) have sculpted a sound at once massive but muscular and lean. It's also well balanced, with ample breathers from the ferocity in "Birch Tree" (buoyant in spite of a slightly naff chorus) and light-

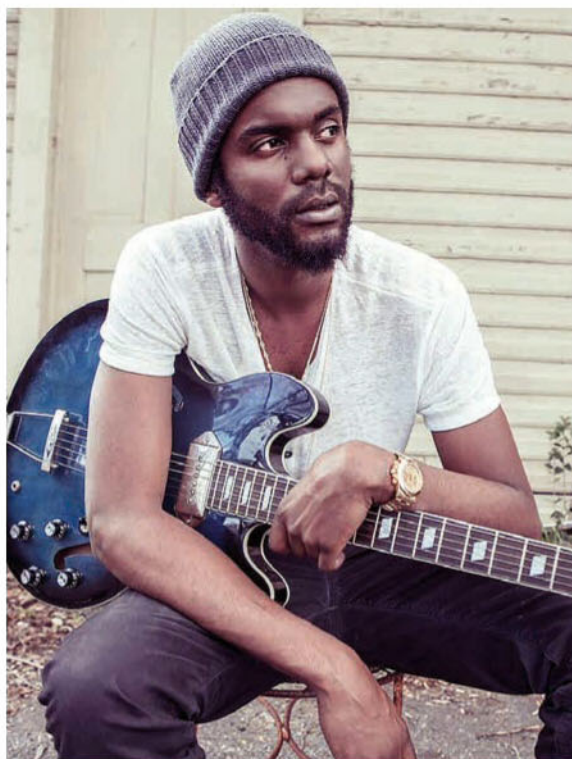
'What Went Down' is a record made for festivals.

ers-in-the-air ballads "Give it All" and "London Thunder".

In the post interval one-two of "Snake Oil", which opens in the vein of U2's "Elevation" and redeems itself with some Zepelin riffs, and "Night Swimmers", tearing open in the middle with a juddering bass solo, there's enough heft in the back end to sustain interest, even if the successive "London Thunder" and "Lonely Hunter" are hard to distinguish in more than name.

"A Knife in the Ocean" closes the record in reverb-drenched widescreen, as befits a reflection on mortality. Death and mania loom large over the entire album, recorded in the same French town where Vincent van Gogh was hospitalised after hacking off a chunk of his own ear. "We wanted to suck in a bit of that madness," Philippakis told *NME*. By next June, Foals should be well and truly match-fit for Glastonbury, and one suspects Philippakis would like to go one better than the penultimate slot. Imagining these songs played live, it doesn't seem like too much of a stretch.

KEY TRACKS: "What Went Down", "Mountain At My Gates"



Two Sides to Every Story

Much-admired guitar hero flirts with brilliance on second album

Gary Clark Jr. *The Story of Sonny Boy Slim*

Warner ★★ ★



Gary Clark Jr.'s credentials, which include performances with the Rolling Stones, Foo Fighters, Paul McCartney, Dave Matthews Band and other heavyweights, suggest this Texan bluesman is a firm favourite among the rock establishment, and thus perhaps a little inoffensive. And while the smooth production and virtuosic guitar playing may seem the dominant features on first listen here, further immersion reveals a record of more depth and variety than that suggests.

Clark's brand of blues-rock is fairly conservative – a vehicle for his elaborate solos, and certain tracks stick to that limited template. On others, however, flavours of gospel and, most strikingly, funk and hip-hop take *Sonny Boy Slim* into a different realm. Opener "The Healing", once you overlook some uninspiring lyrics, is propelled irresistibly by a beat reminiscent of early Kanye. Even better is the thudding "Star", with its clear debt to Funkadelic and D'Angelo. Clark is best when brash, and when exploring multiple styles simultaneously within one ambitious track.

The exception to this is "Church", a strange but alluring anomaly. A sweet acoustic ballad complete with harmonica and Clark's finest vocal performance to date, this is a rare moment of vulnerability on an album that exudes self-belief; one that reveals several different sides to Gary Clark Jr. The trick is to settle on, and evolve, that which is most potent.

KEY TRACKS: "Star", "Church", "The Healing"

BARNABY SMITH



Metric

Pagans in Vegas

Create/Control/MMI ★★ ★½

Canadians pay homage to their heroes on sixth album

Metric are a curio: overachieving niche act with a gift for anthemic new-wave, or chart-pop pretenders slumming it as art-rock concern? They're positioned as the former, but on *Pagans In Vegas* the latter seems truer – and more damning. Opener "Lie Lie Lie" kicks off with a blatant callback to Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus", and when Joy Division guitar lines snake through "For Kicks", it suggests the band are looking back to move forward. But those touchstones are less homages and more badges of cool pinned on a mass-produced product. The elegant pulse on "Cascades" proves they work best when letting their machinery shine. But Metric remain in search of their own personality. **MARCUS TEAGUE**



Szymon

Tigersapp Eloper/EMI

★★★★★

Posthumous collection of songs from an artist taken too soon

Even divorced from its heart-breaking backstory, *Tigersapp* is a special record; a moving insight into the musical mind of Newcastle artist Szymon Borzestowski, who sadly took his own life, aged just 23. Lovingly released by his family and A&R team – who signed him to an EMI development deal at 19 – it's a collection of sounds cooked up on modest home recording equipment full of innovation, hope and life. A singer-songwriter with a producer's ear, his honeyed vocals imbue folkier tracks like "Golden" with a sense of sun-dappled warmth, while the electronic-meets-organic instrumentals reflect his love of Animal Collective and Bonobo. Szymon might be gone, but his beautiful music will outlive us all. **DARREN LEVIN**

Caught in a Mosh

Byron Bay hardcore heroes up their heavy ante on fifth album

Parkway Drive *Ire* Resist Records ★★★★★



Parkway Drive don't fuck around. With *Deep Blue* (2010) and *Atlas* (2012) cementing them as one of metalcore's leading lights, their fifth album could've seen them experiment and maybe dial up the mellow a bit. Nope. If anything *Ire* feels weightier and denser than *Atlas*, with moments like the hectic circle-pit savagery of "Dying to Believe" and the crunch of "Bottom Feeder" balancing terrifying riffage, melodicism and Winston McCall's caustic vocal delivery with the confidence of a band at the height of their powers.

There are points though – the epic sweep of lead single "Vice Grip", the piano-led ponderous stomp of "Writing's on the Wall" and the shiny bounce of "Vicious" – that showcase a muscular power-metal edge to the Byron Bay five-piece. Importantly though, it feels like a natural evolution and mixes nicely with their metalcore heritage on the inexorable heaviness of "Crushed" with

KEY TRACKS:
"Vice Grip",
"Dying To Believe"



McCall's growls of "Crushed/By the fists of God" sitting gloriously atop a mountain of 'fuck the man' sentiment.

Elsewhere, "The Sound of Violence" and "Destroyer" lay Jeff Ling and Luke Kilpatrick's shredding on thicker than helicopter memes on disgraced parliamentary speakers – with McCall's vocals dialled up to strip-paint level – and there's also the now-almost obligatory hardcore 'fuck the haters, this one's for you' cut in the breakdown-laden "Dedicated". As a result, *Ire* is Parkway Drive in their natural state: uncompromising and brutal.

JAYMZ CLEMENTS



Glen Hansard

Didn't He Ramble ANTI- ★★★★★

Earthy blast of big brotherly love from Frames frontman

Glen Hansard has your back. The voice of Irish heartland rockers the Frames will be your mirror, your brother, your lover, your shelter from the storm and even your union rep. "I will recognise you," he sings in "Stay the Road", "when you are lost to yourself". The earthy, indelible blues of "Wedding Ring" and the ragged back-slap of "Winning Streak"; the lean-on-me soul of "Her Mercy" and passionate defence of "My Little Ruin" are the noble soul of humanity etched in blood: fiddles marching to righteous war and town bells ringing forgiveness. If 2012's *Rhythm & Repose* was an act of reconstruction after emotional devastation, this is all that hard-earned self-love and determination hurled forward. Catch. M.D.



Chris Cornell

Higher Truth Universal

★★★★★

Soundgarden singer makes his strongest solo statement yet

For a man who made his reputation wailing like a banshee out the front of Soundgarden, Chris Cornell's voice has always been equally affecting in an acoustic setting – see Temple of the Dog and "Seasons", his contribution to the *Singles* soundtrack. This, his fourth solo album, is a largely acoustic affair, and after the disaster that was the R&B experiment of 2009's *Scream* is a marked return to form. As downbeat lyrically as you'd expect, there is still something uplifting about "Murderer of Blue Skies" and "Worried Moon" despite their slightly desperate lyrics. The sun does shine through on closer "Our Time in the Universe", though, suggesting Cornell is getting near to finding something like peace. SIMON JONES



Dave Rawlings Machine

Nashville Obsolete

Acony/Redeye Worldwide ★★★★★½

Woodland Studios bosses craft Americana release of the year

The second LP from DRM is the seventh penned by Rawlings and long-time musical partner Gillian Welch. Tracked direct to tape, *Nashville Obsolete* demolishes the prevailing Music City zeitgeist with its disarming surface level simplicity. The Welch-Rawlings sound courts, as ever, old-time and Appalachian tradition, encompassing infectious ragtime ("The Last Pharaoh") and sweet ditties ("Candy"), embellished with turns for fiddle, mandolin and strings. But it's the duo's eye for lyrical detail that really floors: see the travellers boarding a train with "a body, and a handkerchief, and a hatchet" in meandering, 11-minute escapist ramble "The Trip". GARETH HIPWELL



Duran Duran

Paper Gods Warner

★★★★

Old romantics slap and glitch up one third of a great comeback

With Nile Rodgers and Mark Ronson tugging the envelope of a widescreen robot-epic production job, Duran Duran's 14th album might have been the comeback of the year had stamina prevailed. From portentous vocoder intro to gnarly hook and unusually potent social context, the seven-minute title suite is a big-impact opener. Kiesza howls up a hurricane in the teeth-grinding apocalyptic disco of "Last Night In the City" and Janelle Monáe is likewise gripping on "Pressure Off". Sadly, "Danceophobia" marks an early decline into electro-landfill even before Lindsay Lohan's cardboard cameo, leaving only "The Universe Alone" finale to remind us that they were going somewhere with this. MICHAEL DWYER



Stereophonics

Keep the Village Alive Warner

★★★★½

Ninth studio album from perennial Welsh rockers

The line between a plodding pub rock song and a roof-raising anthem is one Stereophonics have spent a great deal of their career navigating, not always successfully. That battle is played out early on *Keep the Village Alive* – opener "C'est La Vie" is a surefire live favourite and killer kick-off to proceedings; two songs later, "Sing Little Sister" is as average as its title. Thankfully the rest of the album is far more engaging – of particular note is the nostalgic, string-laden Sixties gleam of "My Hero", the melancholy but rousing "White Lies" and ballad "Song for the Summer". Kelly Jones' voice is, as always, a husky thing of wonder, imbuing even the album's weaker moments with undeniable pathos. ROD YATES



The Paper Kites

twelvefour Sony

★★★★

Melbourne quintet stay up late with sophomore outing

twelvefour is a concept album, of sorts – 10 tracks penned between the hours of midnight and 4:00am on the specious premise that this is when an artist reaches his or her ‘creative peak’. The muses of the witching hour seem to have breathed some hazy Eighties nostalgia into songwriter Sam Bentley’s ear (“Revelator Eyes”). Much of *twelvefour* plays like a waking dream-diary, while tracks such as the Simon & Garfunkel-inspired “Neon Crimson” recall the folk bent of early EPs and debut LP *States* (2013). Insubstantial lyrics, though, do little to differentiate Bentley’s vocal from the soft focus of the mix – see “...like I woke up from a dream only to find that I still hadn’t woke up.” GARETH HIPWELL



Low

Ones and Sixes Inertia

★★★★

Slowcore legends keep finding ways of reinventing themselves

“What part of me don’t you know?” is posed midway through Low’s 11th album. Are married couple Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker asking this of each other? Perhaps it’s directed at those who’ve followed Low from their early “slowcore” years to the experimental past decade on Sub Pop? We’ve watched them do minimal. We’ve watched them be jammy and abrasive. On *Ones and Sixes* they’ve found another way to redefine their own expectations of the band, and ours. On 2013’s *The Invisible Way*, they sounded alone together. Here, they’re mostly in unison; their voices merging in sublime harmony on “Landslide”. Producer B.J. Burton brings an industrial edge not heard since 2007’s *Drums and Guns*. DARREN LEVIN



Yo La Tengo’s Mixed Bag

Critically-adored U.S. band cover themselves and others on patchwork disc

Yo La Tengo Stuff Like That There

Matador/Remote Control ★★½



The New Jersey band built around husband-and-wife Georgia Hubley and Ira Kaplan recently had their 30th anniversary. Instead of celebrating with yet another critically-acclaimed new album, they’ve put together this, a mish-mash of covers of other peoples’ songs and their own past work, plus two random new songs. It’s a trick they pulled off better on 1990’s *Fakebook*.

Yo La Tengo are no strangers to the world of cover versions. For years they’ve supported their local indie radio station WFMU with an annual visit to the studio, where they play a cover of any song requested by a listener who calls in with a donation. In 2006, a 31-track compilation of those performances called *Yo La Tengo Is Murdering the Classics* proved they could play just about anything, from Billy Joel to Brian Eno.

All of which makes *Stuff Like That There* a bit of a shrugged-off experience. They limit themselves to guitar, double bass and a small drumkit, resulting in a sparse, mumbly outing with none of their feedback-drenched drones or soul-pop excursions. They cover everything from the Lovin’ Spoonful to the Cure, but with the scaled-down set-up, the songs stay in second gear. And does anyone really need another version of Hank Williams’ “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry”? Meanwhile, re-working bits of their own back catalogue is more a curio for fanatics than an essential addition to their already impressive canon. BARRY DIVOLA

KEY TRACKS:

“Rickety”, “The Ballad Of Red Buckets”



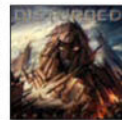
Natalie Imbruglia

Male Sony

★★½

Another comeback, another covers album

On her first release in six years, Imbruglia focuses on songs originally recorded by male artists. Annie Lennox did the same with *Medusa* (1995), as did Tori Amos with *Strange Little Girls* (2001), and while both records were subversive, dark and often political, *Male* does little other than showcase each of her choices with a feminine, folky twist. While her take on Neil Young’s “Only Love Can Break Your Heart” and Death Cab For Cutie’s “I Will Follow You Into the Dark” are pleasant, they’re also pedestrian. If only she’d tackled each song with the same guts as her stomping, bluegrass cover of the Cure’s “Friday I’m In Love”, *Male* might have been a little more fun. MICHAEL WILTON



Disturbed

Immortalized Warner

★★

Rested nu-metal titans come roaring back onto the scene

Had success greeted the various projects Disturbed’s members embarked upon when they announced a hiatus in 2011, it’s hard to believe this sixth album would have happened. But it has, and the results speak not of an act that’s learned new tricks, but of one desperately falling back on old habits in an attempt to reclaim their metal crown, even down to their trademark choosing of an unlikely cover song. Which, if you want to hear David Draiman murdering Simon & Garfunkel’s “The Sound of Silence” with all the subtlety of a ten-ton hammer, is a treat. There’s nothing ostensibly wrong with songs like “The Vengeful One”, and the LP ticks all the Disturbed boxes of old. Sometimes, though, that’s just not enough. ROD YATES

Meat Wave

Chicago noise-rockers teach a lesson in punk done right

Delusion Moon Cooking Vinyl ★★★★★

BAND TO WATCH

Chicago three-piece Meat Wave know there's nothing new under the sun, happily drawing on the scuzz of Naked Raygun and the tribal chug of Jesus Lizard and Shellac to create a hybrid of everything that was good about noise-rock from the windy city. They know their home town's musical legacy well and, most importantly, realise that genre nods will only get you so far. It's Meat Wave's palpable energy that elevates songs like "Delusion Moon" and "Cosmic Zoo" into pit-frenzy fodder. At times, their ample melodic wash threatens to overflow the simple skeleton of the songs – but it sounds bratty rather than contrived, a bit like Hüsker Dü at their best. *Delusion Moon* is a fully realised and confidently scrappy record that draws on true punk spirit, not hand-me-down angst. Founded in 2011, Meat Wave already feel fully-formed, two records into their career. Everything from this point will be icing on an already moorish cake.

MATT COYTE

KEY TRACKS: "Delusion Moon", "Sinkhole"



KEY FACTS

HOMETOWN Chicago
BACKSTORY Singer/guitarist Chris Sutter was studying journalism when he formed Meat Wave with pals Joe Gac (bass) and Ryan Wiziak (drums). His lyrics are suitably clever.

NAMING RIGHTS The band took their name from a headline on the absurd news parody website The Onion. The story, titled "Dozens Dead In Chicago-Area Meatwave", was about meat exhaustion.



Empress Of

Me Terrible Records / XL

★★★★★

Beats and the deeply personal come together on debut

The cover art for *Me*, the debut album from 25-year-old Lorely Rodriguez, couldn't be more misleading: shoulders hunched, Rodriguez's face is meekly obscured behind her hand. If her body language is tentative, *Me* is anything but: produced and written on a laptop solely by the Brooklyn based artist, this is big, brash music to dance to centred around forthright and deeply personal lyrics touching on everything from gender politics to living just above the poverty line to the joys of sex. Oscillating between being completely vulnerable and confidently in charge, Rodriguez channels the fierce energy of spiritual forebears like Björk and Grimes, landing on a thrilling sound all her own.

J.J.



Beirut

No No No (Remote Control/4AD)

★★½

Beirut leader returns but leaves magic behind

The immediate thing to know about *No No No*, fourth album from indie-folk prodigy Zach Condon, is the brass, accordion and string lyricism of yore have been drastically reduced in favour of piano, drum and bass-led pop arrangements. The effect is dramatic and unmistakable: Beirut's character is gone, the romance kaput. Maybe that's on purpose. *No No No* follows in the wake of a tumultuous period in Condon's life, from divorce to hospitalisation for exhaustion. But you wouldn't know it here; Condon's never been a poet, but on *No No No* the man is maddeningly absent – at least until gorgeous closer "So Allowed" ("I want to say you're mine"), an aching reminder of how good we once had it.

MARCUS TEAGUE



Mercury Rev

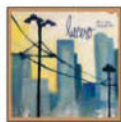
The Light In You Bella Union

★★★★★

Psych-rock survivors reprise golden years on album eight

It's 17 years since Mercury Rev's high watermark *Deserter's Songs*, but the sonic gap feels like a mere blip. From opener "The Queen Of Swans" – featuring timpani, woodwind, sleigh bells and Jonathan Donahue's typically dippy declaration, "Love comes thirsty" – this is Mercury Rev back to their otherworldly best. Donahue and Grasshopper have steered this band through so many permutations – from their acid-friend David Baker-fronted years to the cinematic opuses cut with producer David Fridmann. If nothing else the LP encapsulates the sheer joy of making music with your best mate. "We ain't got nothing to lose," sings Grasshopper on "Moth Light". They're in it for the long haul, and it's a beautiful thing.

D.L.



Lucero

All a Man Should Do

ATO/Liberation ★★★★★

Tennessee reprobates settle into Memphis soul on ninth LP

The endpoint in a process begun with *1372 Overton Park* (2009), *All a Man Should Do* sees acoustic guitar, brass, and Rick Steff's clement piano and organ lines triumph over bar-room punk skeeze. Hometown Memphis is both musical bedrock and elusive ideal here – a haven pined for from a desolate L.A. in highlight "Went Looking for Warren Zevon's Los Angeles", and a safe harbour in the shamrock-hued "They Called Her Killer". A marked softening in singer Ben Nichols' familiar growl means his reflections on failed romance, drinker's regret and longing for quietude speak more to fatigue with a life lived too hard than to the bleary-eyed introspection of a self-aware – yet inveterate – delinquent.

G.H.



Darwin Deez

Double Down Inertia

★★★★

Puppyish New Yorker returns with restless third LP

While it's tempting to dismiss Darwin Deez as an example of hipster vacuity (the hair, the attitude, the Brooklyn zipcode), the fact that he performed, recorded, mixed and mastered *Double Down* suggests substance. The lyrical snideness of previous LP *Songs For Imaginative People* is largely maintained, with the conversational tone coming across like a goofier, less soulful Of Montreal. Musically and instrumentally, *Double Down* is surprisingly conventional – too diverse for any punk credentials yet not ambitious enough to warrant his label of 'pop savant'. This middle ground does result in fine songs like "Time Machine" and "The Other Side", on an album of energy and bounce, if not profundity.

BARNABY SMITH



Rob Thomas

The Great Unknown

Emblem/Atlantic

★★★★

Reliable pop rocker doesn't disappoint on solo album

Don't let the title fool you: Rob Thomas remains a known quantity on his third solo album. While that means there aren't many surprises, the good news is he's still the same consummate pop-rock craftsman who has been making it all sound so smooth for years. Reunited with Matchbox Twenty producer Matt Serletic, Thomas piles on the hooks right from the opener, "I Think We'd Feel Good Together", a soulful come-on. Even catchier is "Hold On Forever" – it's pure acoustic-guitar bliss. Elsewhere, the title tune is an atmospheric ballad about "driving through the valley of the great unknown". With Thomas at the wheel, you can trust the journey.

CHUCK ARNOLD



Silicon

Personal Computer Domino

★★★★½

Former Mint Chick turns to soulful, late-night robo-funk

Kody Nielson – aka Silicon – and his brother, Unknown Mortal Orchestra's Ruban, possess remarkably similar singing voices and a shared predilection to mine from the same weird corners of the musical universe where funk, jazz and psychedelia druggily co-exist. *Personal Computer* almost plays like a nocturnal companion piece to UMO's day-glo 2015 LP *Multi-Love*: a sparser, more synth-heavy stew of funk and R&B designed for late night consumption. Themes of technology causing personal disconnect may run throughout, but that doesn't stop Nielson from welcoming you into his twilight zone – a beguiling place worth the trip.

JAMES JENNINGS

Let the Music Play

Tall Go-Between walks to his own beat with grace, wit and style

Robert Forster *Songs to Play* EMI ★★★★★



In rock as in life, there comes a time when it's all about how lightly you carry your baggage. 2008's *The Evangelist* was a palpable act of will for Robert Forster, the great album he had to prove to himself in the turbulence of Grant McLennan's passing. This is the one he can't help. Even if it takes seven years.

"Songwriters On the Run" is the song from which the Cohen-esque album title is drawn. It's impossible not to picture the Go-Betweens united again in the whimsical scenario: two noble jailbird bards on a mission of mystery and romance; half-whispered but gravely, like a fable to a sleepy child.

The line between songwriter and protagonist is gossamer thin from the start. With its soft-shoe-stomp rhythm and spindly guitar riff, "Learn to Burn" is a jumble of old rocker's wisdom with time for Dylan and petrol and that's all. With its "Cattle and Cane" texture and mariachi flourish, "A Poet Walks" is a self-portrait reflected in foreign café windows.

With its flashback to "my future wife . . . across the sea", "And I Knew" is a sister song to "The Evangelist": a grateful ode to true love as destiny. And only Forster could sing "I Love Myself and I Always Have" without a glimmer of a quail. Funny, true and uncomplicated as ever, there's little reason not to here.

MICHAEL DWYER

KEY TRACKS:

"Songwriters On the Run", "Let Me Imagine You", "A Poet Walks"



The Snowdroppers

Business ABC Music/Universal

★★★★½

Sydney quartet quiet the party, up the songwriting on LP three

Maturing beyond their ram-bunctious blues-rock origins, and in place of their second album's grimy Caves-ian rock, *Business* finds the Snowdroppers growing into their lean bluesy power-pop storytelling skin on "Devil Child" and excellent closer "Hold On". Standing out, though, is slinky pop rock fare like "Maryanne", the type of song that made the Go-Betweens so beloved, but coloured here with shades of the Gaslight Anthem, all whip-smart pop-rock dealing in shrouding emotions behind plaintive honesty. Though uneven – misfires like "Repeating Myself" and the title-track feel undercooked – the band's growth beyond simply suspenders, beards and colonial blues impresses. JAYMZ CLEMENTS



Halsey

Badlands Astralwerks

★★★★½

Pop's next great hope searches for a sound to call her own

Propelled by a burgeoning online fanbase and significant industry support, 20-year-old Halsey has attempted to craft an alt-pop record that pleases both mainstream radio and the indie blogosphere. The result is a muddled collection that fails to set her apart from peers like Lorde and Ellie Goulding. Some experiments work: the dark, minimal opening tracks "Castle" and "Hold Me Down" are effective vocal showcases, but would-be anthem "New Americana" is neither punchy nor provocative enough to stick. "Roman Holiday", however, is a sweet teen snapshot, complete with twinkly synths and retro drums, while "Colors" channels 1989 on its widescreen chorus.

DAN F. STAPLETON



James' Tentative Start

Soulful crooner not quite ready for centre stage

Jarryd James

Thirty One Universal ★★★



Jarryd James, former member of troubadour Matt Corby's backing band, has made a much-publicised transition to solo artist this year.

Buzz is huge off the back of just two singles – the ubiquitous “Do You Remember” and follow-up “Give Me Something” – but despite having two star producers on board in Joel Little (Lorde, Daniel Johns) and Malay (Frank Ocean), the Brisbaneite falls shy of expectations with his debut LP. In fact, perhaps the biggest disappointment is that the record meets our expectations almost exactly – there are no surprises and nothing half as immediate as “Do You Remember”, just the familiar clipped beats and wounded falsetto that marked Little's very on-trend nu-R'n'B work with Johns.

And so we have tracks that are not awful but indistinct, and tending to bleed into one another, turning the album into one long, rather sooky lament (James refers to a “baby” a lot, and almost always in the past tense). “Undone” is the second-

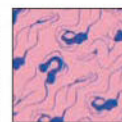
KEY TRACKS:

“Do You Remember”, “Undone”



best track, a treated violin loop creating tension underneath the vocals until the song breaks open with a slow-burning chorus and prickling percussion and piano. But the opportunity to end it abruptly after the last uttered line, increasing the song's power tenfold, is missed. So is the opportunity for James' debut to showcase his merit as a unique solo artist.

ANNABEL ROSS



Favored Nations

The Great Unknown

Ministry Of Sound ★★★

Plastic funk-pop noodlers need to get out of the Xbox

Maybe it's unfair to expect real world dynamism from a band that broke in *Grand Theft Auto* (“The Set Up” is here), but the cocky assertion of fab disco single “Always” ups the promise of this studio trio's (very) long player. There are plenty of tracks as groovy in the 16 that follow, but you can almost hear the e-mails going “swoosh” in the remote assembly process of ex-Diamond Nights singer Morgan Phalen and DFA noodlers Surahn Sidhu and James Curd. Rubbery textures, detached falsetto tunes and lyrics that revel in banality are all dandy plastic pop fodder, but in the long haul from the cruise-liner funk of “Expanded Gong” to the plea for “Regular Pussy”, *The Great Unknown* slowly becomes anything but.

M.D.



Micachu & the Shapes

Good Sad Happy Bad

Rough Trade ★★★

Fragmented “pop” songs to challenge the ear

Mica Levi made one of the best film scores in recent memory with 2014's *Under the Skin*. She has also dabbled in grime and noise, and plays self-made instruments with little regard for standard tuning or time signatures. Her third album fronting Micachu & the Shapes follows suit. Based in unmoored improvisation, the songs are short and anxious, with Levi's wildly variable vocals courting obscurity. Ever questing, the album encompasses broken-down folk (“Relaxing”), chatty spoken-word (“Thinking It”), syrupy wonkiness (“Oh Baby”), hardcore screams (“Unity”) and no-fi hip-hop (“Waiting”). Fascinating stuff, but it doesn't so much pay off as peter out. DOUG WALLEN



Teenage Time Killers

Greatest Hits Vol. 1 Rise

★★★★½

Dave Grohl and pals get back to their basement-punk roots

Before they made major waves with Nirvana and Foo Fighters, Dave Grohl and Pat Smear shook up the underground as members of hardcore bands Scream and the Germs, respectively. They dive back into the CBGB-matinee mosh pit with Teenage Time Killers, a new all-star project including current or former singers from Slipknot, Lamb of God, Dead Kennedys and Fear. Though Grohl (who played bass) and cohorts are far from their teenage years, *Greatest Hits Vol. 1* rarely sounds like old guys trying to relive their pissed-off youth. Rather, it sneers and snarls like a long-lost punk mixtape, fuelled by the forever-young rage of rockers who refuse to grow up. BRANDON GEIST



Guards Of May

Future Eyes Ind./MGM

★★★★

Brisbane rockers go big with debut album

There's no denying Guards Of May's debut is big – big guitars, big vocals, big ideas. Straddling the line between softer metal and harder rock, *Future Eyes* showcases a band intent on delivering something considered, ordered and sharp. Despite the fact the album seems to build and build yet never really hit the peak you're expecting, its execution is solid, slower songs like “Beacons” and “Sirens” sitting comfortably between the more urgent tracks (“Numbers”; “The Observer”, with its desperate vocal delivery; and “Arcadia”, complete with chugging metal intro), giving a sense of cohesion to the whole process. With more experience, these guys will have something.

SAMUEL J. FELL



Public Enemy

Man Plans God Laughs

SPITdigital ★★★

The loudest voices in hip-hop aren't getting any quieter

“Here we come from another time,” Chuck D raps on Public Enemy's 13th studio album. In fact, PE's iconic rap radicalism is as timely as ever in the era of Black Lives Matter, and a couple of tracks here push an argument for their relevance by echoing the spacey minimalism of today's hip-hop. But 55-year-old Chuck D and 56-year-old Flavor Flav are at their best flying the old-school flag, kicking Afrocentric rage over chaotically noisy tracks like “Praise the Loud” or the low-slung funk of “Give Peace a Damn”. If their voices sound a little worn, blame the apathetic fools Chuck attacks in the Rolling Stones-sampling “Honky Talk Rules” for not heeding his message years ago. JON DOLAN

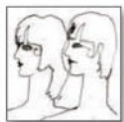


Gay Paris

Ladies and Gentlemen, May We Present To You: the Dark Arts MGM ★★★★★

Sydney hard rockers plumb the deep dark

Where 2013's *The Last Good Party* saw Gay Paris settle into their sound, *Dark Arts* finds them driving it home with impressive coherence. Kicking off with brutal salvo "Draw, You Harlequin Saints!", the album pitches and rolls over lumbering, doomy bedrock rhythms. GP continue to mock the genre-divisions of the hard rock world, splicing the arcane grandeur of Baroness with unserious satanic catechisms ("The Devil and Why You're Not Alone") and frontman Luke Monks' whiskey priest swagger. There's batshit vocal theatricality and anarcho-primitivist dirt-eating weirdness aplenty, plus bestial growls ("It Sleeps in Caves") and even a street-punk turn ("Cult Slang"). **GARETH HIPWELL**



Drinks

Hermits on Holiday Heavenly

★★★★★

Two great minds bask in collective unevenness

Here's a match made in underground-pop heaven: Welsh iconoclast Cate Le Bon and White Fence's Tim Presley, doubling down on knobbly guitar and vocal exchanges. But while their debut offers such winsome entries as the title track and the Wire-esque "Focus on the Street", it's hampered by indulgent cul-de-sacs like "Tim, Do I Like That Dog" and the bluesy sketch "She Walks So Fast". There's so much weirdness and likeability in what these two do – dig the luxurious detachment of Le Bon's vocals – and all those thorned tangles of guitar are almost worth the price of admission. But for every flash of nervous greatness, there's too much accumulated debris to sift through. **DOUG WALLEN**



Murder on the Dance Floor

Dance superstars go neo-soul on difficult sophomore album

Disclosure Caracal Universal ★★½



Second albums are a bitch, so spare a thought for Disclosure. Two years after their debut *Settle* rode in on a white horse to revive UK house and save the world from the hammering headache of EDM, they've returned with

Caracal, a record that doesn't quite live up to the towering expectations.

"There's not really any club music on this one," Guy Lawrence forewarned *ROLLING STONE* this year, and he's not lying. Instead, he and brother Howard have recruited a dizzying cast of collaborators for a collection of songs that are close to indistinguishable – whether it's R&B men of the minute the Weeknd and Miguel, new superstar (and old collaborator) Sam Smith or jazz singer Gregory Porter on vocals, the result is the same pop-structured, soul-streaked and totally beige track a dozen times over. Is this what dance music for people who don't like dance music sounds like?

Only when Lorde collaboration "Magnets" arrives do Disclosure really hit the spot, firing up the production, laying down the percussion and letting Ella Yelich-O'Connor do her thing; though Brisbane's Jordan Rakei and neo-soul singer Kwabs, whose turn on the yearning "Willing & Able" might prove star-making yet, also steal the spotlight. But at over 70-minutes long, you only wish that *Caracal* had more moments like these. **KATIE CUNNINGHAM**

KEY TRACKS:

"Magnets",
"Omen",
"Holding On"



Jess Ribeiro

Kill It Yourself Remote Control

★★★★★

Songstress bares teeth with Australian Gothic masterwork

Ribeiro's 2012 debut *My Little River* drew praise for the striking clarity of its spare country-folk vision. A frequently dissonant fever-dream anchored by close collaboration with Mick Harvey and Ribeiro's own fascination with Patti Smith, *Kill It Yourself* champions a substantially darker vision. Opener "The Wild" recalls Phosphorescent and Micah P. Hinson with its dead march pace; something like electrified zither shimmers like a haze of heat over "Run Rabbit Run", barely obscuring a violent scene soon to be played out, while "Kill It Yourself" is an unblinking, darkly psychosexual meditation on DIY animal slaughter. The burning intensity tapers off in the third act, but the shift arrives as a welcome reprieve. **G.H.**



Dave McCabe & the Ramifications

Church of Miami 1965 Records

★★½

Zutons frontman's solo project dreams of electric sheep

For a man who made his bones writing kooky guitar pop, *Church of Miami* is a hell of a left turn. Answering a hypothetical of, 'what if you started a mid-Eighties Miami Vice synth cult after doing too many drugs in Berlin?', and reinvented as a ghost-in-the-machine electro preacher, McCabe mixes Moroder-*Blade Runner* soundscapes and autobahn synth-pop with undeniable pop chops ("Too Damn Good"). Traces of his Zutonian life remain on "Let Me Go", but while showcasing an obvious love of Kraftwerk, Human League and Neu! (and a charming lack of self-consciousness), the future-prophet proselytizing of the title-track is a stretch too far. **JAYMZ CLEMENTS**



Last Dinosaurs

Wellness Dew Process/Universal

★★★

Brisbane indie act expand their sound with sophomore LP

"[T]he lives of people in their early twenties...are very difficult to make interesting, even when they seemed interesting to those living them..." writes Dave Eggers. LD vocalist Sean Caskey's desultory introspections and youthful ruminations on romance are cases in point. Still, both drummer Dan Koyama and lead guitarist Lachlan Caskey shine here, while Michael Sloane proves a worthy successor to former bassist Sam Gethin-Jones (see "Evie"). Produced by Scott Horscroft (*Empire of the Sun*), *Wellness* builds assuredly on the template laid out by 2012's *In a Million Years*, pulling punchy synths and electro flavours into the band's core guitar-pop sound. All that remains is for their songwriting game to rise to the occasion. **G.H.**



FIDLAR

Too Warner Music

★★★½

L.A. punks return with their sights set on Weezer's crown

FIDLAR's 2013 debut showed a band that didn't seem too interested in being taken seriously, smashing pop-punk and chugging metal together in a way that was fun, if a little throw-away. Album two sees them ramp up the novelty factor, churning out disaffected teen anthems that should have Rivers Cuomo ringing his lawyer and the Bloodhound Gang planning a comeback. When it works, it's undeniably fun. Songs like "40oz. On Repeat" show a real knack for infectious pop, while duds like "West Coast" just sound like a pitch for the soundtrack of *The OC: Class of 2015*. FIDLAR show promise, but unless they start growing up they run the risk of becoming an ironic footnote. **MATT COYTE**



Thirsty Merc

Shifting Gears

Ind./MGM ★★★½

Local rock-botherers stick to recipe on fourth album

Thirsty Merc reliably make commercial product well. The Sydney band pluck proven riffs and sentiments from the well-worn canon of classic rock and repackage it in their own, in-offensive image. Their music scans like the result of menu-ordering: piano love song of regret ("Every Now and Then")? Check. Slinky tune about cruising on a Saturday night ("Sweet Talker")? Check. That one where they have a bloopy synth break for "fun" ("The Grind")? Yup. "I'm Crazy" and McCartney-esque "Mirror To Your Heart" prove their arranging skills, and 'Sweet Talker' could have been killer in the hands of a Josh Homme-character. But for Thirsty Merc, middle of the road is too sweet a ride. **MARCUS TEAGUE**



Oh Wonder

Oh Wonder Dew Process/UMA

★★½

Vapid UK pair conjure indie-electronic landfill on limp debut

London girl/boy duo Oh Wonder announced themselves in 2014 by promising to release a single every month for a year. They did and the scheme worked – each topped a bunch of online charts and the resulting collection of songs is bundled here. It is frightfully boring. Oh Wonder's long-game admin begs a tick for work ethic, but it diverts attention from the trainwreck: tumblr-poetry over cookie-cutter cafe-R&B. For 53 long, syrupy minutes the doe-eyed Josephine Vander Gucht and Anthony West skate the surface of emotional intimacy, desperately looking for the vein tapped by James Blake, the xx and the Postal Service. Closer "Plans" bleats, "this is the life, we were born for this". Abort. **M.T.**

The Likely Lads Return

British four-piece overcome their past to carve out a new future

The Libertines

Anthems For Doomed Youth EMI ★★★



Fights, drugs, escaped Thai rehabs, breakups, side-projects, solo albums, aborted reunions, scrapped sessions, chaotic comeback gigs: it's a miracle *Anthems for Doomed Youth* exists. The Libertines mythologised reign as gutter-snipe indie-rock poet laureates of Britain (circa '02-'05) began an upshot of British pride (manifested by imbeciles dressing like *Oliver Twist* extras) and ended with a whimper; but creative foils Pete Doherty and Carl Barât prove far greater together than apart. Rather than recreating the granulated brilliance of their first two albums, in 2015 they aim for refined evolution.

"Heart of the Matter", "Belly of the Beast" and "Fury of Chonburi" are Clash-evoking thumpers in the band's finest tradition, and their literary

KEY TRACKS:
"Heart of the Matter", "You're My Waterloo"



BAIO

The Names Liberator/Glass Notes

★★★★

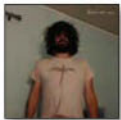
Solo debut from Vampire Weekend bassist

pretensions remain too; the meditative title-track is named for Wilfred Owen's WW1 paean, and Kipling lends inspiration to the contained ferocity of "Gunga Din".

Youthful insouciance and dreams of Albion and Arcadia, however, give way to the album's heart; piano-led laments of past mistakes and aging ("You're My Waterloo"), while – amid Ed Sheeran man Jake Gosling's on-point production – "Fame and Fortune" and "Iceman" deliver cautionary (autobiographical) broad-strokes of tainted London.

Still, the album surpasses all (admittedly low) expectations. Barât, Doherty and co. always possessed a strange gestalt energy in embodying the apprehension, anxiety and optimism of early '00s Britain. And somehow, 10 years on and against the odds, they possess it still. **JAYMZ CLEMENTS**

BAIO is the dance project of Vampire Weekend bassist Chris Baio, but his thoughtful, eclectic debut deserves a label beyond "side-project". It's easy to scan *The Names* as a product of day job downtime, but it's much more than a collection of tour bus hard drive dumps. Across 39 minutes of electro-pop, IDM and kitchen-sink techno, Baio's managed to carve out a real arc. His voice isn't remarkable, but his English accent-affectation is – he's been living in London since 2013. His snooty sincerity and quirky production makes bubbly jams like "Needs" convincingly fun. But when he drops the vocals, like on spacey "All the Idiots", his hope to be making "melancholy dance music" rings true. **M.T.**



Lou Barlow

Brace the Wave Domino

★★★★

Indie rock legend delivers stripped-back splendour

Lou Barlow has been busy of late. After rejoining Dinosaur Jr. and reforming Sebadoh (both of whom have released career-topping albums in the past couple of years), he's returned with his third solo album under his own name (it's arguable that his Folk Implosion and Sentridoh LPs count as solo outings as well). *Brace the Wave* continues down the path set by Barlow on the last Sebadoh album. Freshly scarred by a break-up, his stripped-back songs are achingly personal, but polished enough to annoy those who expected more four-track demo lo-fi. Barlow's distinctive voice gets better with age, and lyrically he's at the peak of his game. *Brace the Wave* is a quiet, delicate victory.

MATT COYTE



Defeater

Abandoned Epitaph

★★★★½

Few surprises but plenty of heart on Boston act's fourth LP

These punks take themselves very seriously: their melodic hardcore is unsparingly dark, and each of their three albums to date has contributed to one sprawling, fictional narrative. This latest chapter should please those who've been following the story – but others should pay attention, too. *Abandoned* includes a couple of impressive cuts that demonstrate just how cohesive these five musicians have become: "Contrition" is a long, gut-wrenching crescendo that loses none of its power on repeated listens, while "Borrowed & Blue" creates a rich atmosphere from modest ingredients. While not particularly innovative, *Abandoned* is a solid contribution to the catalogue.

DAN F. STAPLETON



Chvrches' Familiar Pop

Glaswegian trio don't break new ground, but improve on the path they're walking

Chvrches *Every Open Eye* Liberator ★★★★★



"If it ain't broke don't fix it" is a maxim artists either embrace or rally against. It's been the foundation of AC/DC's career; conversely, Radiohead have always been too busy moving forward to glance at their past. If *Every Open Eye* is anything to go by – and given that it's only Chvrches' second album, it might be a tad early to view it as conclusive proof – the Glaswegian trio seem quite comfortable sticking to what they know. Or, rather, improving on it. For while *Every Open Eye* is clearly cut from the same cloth as their 2013 debut, *The Bones of What You Believe* – pulsing electro-pop with hooks for days, paired with vocalist Lauren Mayberry's wounded but defiant delivery; it was even recorded in the band's own Alucard Studios where they recorded their debut – its melodies are sharper, its songs crisper and less cluttered.

That much is true of first single "Leave a Trace", in which Mayberry delivers an unforgettable vocal melody over a raw but reserved electro backing; "Clearest Blue" is similarly minimal, before exploding midway in a climax destined to send festival crowds into raptures. "Make Them Gold" is straight out of 1985, parping synths laying a bed for yet more Mayberry hooks, while Martin Doherty's sole vocal contribution, "High Enough To Carry You Over", is superior to his work on the debut. It takes 11 songs for the trio to chart new ground with gentle closer "Afterglow", Mayberry somberly singing "I've given up all I can" without so much as a beat or blip in sight. It's a stirring closer, and a hint, perhaps, that the next album will take some more chances.

WILLIAM HARRIS

KEY TRACKS:

"Leave a Trace", "Make Them Gold", "Afterglow"



Petite Noir

La Vie Est Belle / Life Is Beautiful Domino

★★★★

African rhythms meet the high drama of New Wave on debut

In his guise of Petite Noir, 24-year-old half-Congolese, half-Angolan, South African raised Yannick Ilunga has birthed something he's dubbed "Noirwave": a blend of traditional African rhythmic uplift married with the synth-favouring high drama of Eighties New Wave. There are traces of everything from Tears for Fears to TV on the Radio, and a palpable sense of exhilaration as the singer confidently carves out his own path. Standout "Best" is the distillation of Ilunga's great promise: an explosive, high stakes anthem where he sings about a relationship with the same kind of urgency as a man facing the apocalypse. A fitting soundtrack for the end times, then, but also an assured beginning for Ilunga.

JAMES JENNINGS



Garrett Kato

That Low and Lonesome Sound Ind.

★★★★½

Warm, lush experimentation defines Byron Bay local's debut

Now based in Byron Bay, but originating from Canada, Kato's debut LP is a warm and gentle gem, rich with songwriting nous, simple instrumentation, emotion leaking from every pore. A singer-songwriter at heart, Kato has enlisted a clutch of fine instrumentalists to help flesh out his songs of "celebration, reflection and experimentation". Equal parts Americana, floating pop and folk, *That Low and Lonesome Sound* is the mark of an artist with serious potential. "UFOs" showcases his vocal abilities over a subtle electronic beat and sunny electric guitar lines, opening an album that's warm, lush and which covers the range of sonic ground with ease.

SAMUEL J. FELL

Maiden's Epic Book

British metallers enter their fifth decade together in bold fashion

Iron Maiden

The Book of Souls EMI ★★★★★



At some point in the past 15 years, Iron Maiden became a progressive metal band. As you weigh up *The Book of Souls*' 18-minute closer "Empire of the Clouds", the punk rock roots of the band's 1980 self-titled debut seem, not surprisingly, a lifetime ago. To be fair, ever since they adapted Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* into a 13-plus minute epic on 1984's *Powerslave*, the British metallers have repeatedly showed a penchant for placing at least one epic on each album. But that urge is fully indulged on *The Book of Souls*, their 16th studio outing, with three songs pushing past the 10-minute mark. At 92 sprawling minutes over two albums, the question must be asked: have Iron Maiden disappeared up their own backsides

KEY TRACKS:

"The Red and the Black", "Empire of the Clouds"



in a Spinal Tap show of self-indulgence?

The answer, happily, is no. For one, guitarist Adrian Smith is on hand to ensure that his contributions, such as "Speed Of Light", "Tears of a Clown" and "The Great Unknown", represent as (relatively) short, sharp Maiden anthems, the likes of which could have fit snugly onto 2000's comeback album *Brave New World*.

Perhaps the greatest praise you can bestow upon "Empire of the Clouds" and its fellow epics, "The Red and the Black" and the title-track, is that even after myriad listens, they continue to reveal new intricacies, particularly "Empire...", which grows from a piano intro into one of Maiden's finest songs. For a band entering its 41st year to demonstrate such creativity is nothing short of astonishing.

SIMON JONES



Christian Rich

FW14 Lucky Number/[PIAS]

★★★★

Super producers rope in myriad guests for eclectic mix

Chicago-born Nigerian twins Taiwo and Kehinde Hassan – aka Grammy nominated producers Christian Rich (Drake, Earl Sweatshirt) – claim their debut is a concept album influenced by their love of sci-fi. It's somewhat jarring, then, that the first words heard involve rapper Vince Staples' lurid sexcapades. Jarring shifts and earth-bound lyrics about relationships soon reveal themselves to be the only loose unifying threads: a jazz intro leads into the EDM-meets-hip-hop of "High", followed by excursions into dancefloor bangers and R&B slow jams. It's lifted by some solid production, but ultimately plays like a sampler of what Christian Rich can do rather than a well-rounded whole.

J.J.



Ash Grunwald

NOW Shock

★★★★½

Australian roots mainstay turns to psych-rock for new release

Ash Grunwald's eighth release sees him further extending himself, still searching for new situations into which to wedge his distinctive take on blues. This time Grunwald enlists Wolfmother keysman Ian Perez and ex-BKB drummer Pete Wilkins to help him charge down a psych-rock path; a path essentially built by the blues – it's a good fit. A muscular, hard and heavy record, *NOW* throbs with an undeniable groove, the decision to utilise a Moog synth instead of a stringed bass giving said grooves an electronic bent which adds the swirling psych element. It's brazen and brash, delivered with both a joyous abandon and reckless intent, a move he should have made years ago.

S.J.F.



The Lighthouse and the Whaler

Mont Royal Smack Face Music

★★★★

Third album from nautically inclined Ohio act

Named after a chapter in *Moby Dick*, this four-piece are clearly unafraid of embracing the big themes: life, death, identity, history. Their well-manicured sound reflects this; less of a folk-rock outing than previous records and more an emotive kind of indie where synths sit comfortably amid the propulsive, guitar-driven numbers, making the LP as reminiscent of Echo and the Bunnymen as it is of Okkervil River. The intriguing production from Marcus Paquin (Arcade Fire) tends to make up for a lack of incisive songwriting, and despite the odd unfortunate lapse into Mumford & Sons territory, *Mont Royal* is generally a sincere and imaginative effort. B.S.



The Arcs

Yours, Dreamily, Nonesuch

★★★★★

Classy side-project for the Black Keys frontman

When Dan Auerbach's not leading the Black Keys he moonlights as a producer, including work with Lana Del Rey and Dr. John. For the Arcs he's built a crack band of musos collected from these gigs, plus some long-time pals, and their debut is a panoramic inverse of the Black Keys' monochromatic schtick. *Yours, Dreamily*, could be a killer crate of undiscovered AM pop and psych-soul gems being played through the wall, an eerie, molasses-thick sound allowing pockets of weirdness – the strangled sax and flute trills on "Velvet Ditch" – to bubble through. Don't pigeon-hole this one: Auerbach and his assembled masters have a dense new universe worth investigating.

MARCUS TEAGUE



The Sword

High Country

Cooking Vinyl Australia ★★★★★½

Austin riffs issue ambitious double album

The evolution of the Sword has been gradual across four prior albums; their bong-water-stained stoner rock always possessed an astral quality, but on *High Country* they move beyond the riffs and expand their scope and venture further into psychedelic territories. The riffs are still denser than a quasar, but among the carrion of "Buzzards" and shred-fest frustration of "Suffer No Fools" sit quiet breaks like "Silver Petals"; adding flourishes of horns turns garage riff monsters like "Early Snow" into classic rock fist-pumpers. Offering more depth are moments like "Mist and Shadow" and the scuzzy synth-funk of "Seriously Mysterious", making for a worthy double album odyssey.

J.C.



Mustered Courage

White Lies & Melodies

Lost Highway Australia ★★½

Melbourne bluegrass travellers prove they can pick – and more

Produced by Forrester Savell (Karnivool), the third LP from Mustered Courage vacillates between classic bluegrass a la Flatt & Scruggs (“Can’t Hide from the Moonshine”) and the adult-oriented roots innovations of Béla Fleck (“A Thousand Bullets”). A more up-tempo offering than *Powerlines* (2013), it’s replete with crisp banjo rolls (“Leave This Life Behind”), liberal solo breaks for mandolin, fiddle, Dobro and guitar, and polished four-part harmonies. There are shades of Old Crow’s Ketch Secor in Nick Keeling’s vocal, while striking points of difference include the addition of drums, brass (“Same Old Thing Again”), and a tilt at urban groove (“Draw Five”). MC carry it all off with hooky appeal. **GARETH HIPWELL**



Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats

Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats

Caroline

★★★★

Bigger, bolder direction for hirsute Denverite

Putting aside the more down-beat folk that defined two solo albums, Rateliff has assembled the Night Sweats as a vehicle for energetic, soulful folk-rock. His majestic voice lands somewhere between Solomon Burke and Joe Cocker, against a compelling instrumental mix combining a lo-fi kind of electric Americana with passionate, rough gospel. Clearly, the Band are a profound inspiration, and the derivativeness occasionally slows things down. Yet Rateliff embraces a certain diversity, proven by the gothic, Latin-flavoured “Shake” and the relatively gentle “I’ll Be Waiting”. Its influences loom large, yet it’s still a joy. **BARNABY SMITH**

Six Strings to Rule Them All

Pink Floyd gun goes off on a dark, sumptuous six-string bender

David Gilmour *Rattle That Lock* Sony ★★½



Give or take the orchestra booking, it’s fair to assume Dave Gilmour can knock off a brooding, scintillating guitar poem like “5am” before breakfast most mornings.

His fourth non-Floyd album in as many decades gets a lot more elaborate and less penetrable as the ensuing panorama unfolds. But as always, you have to wonder whether those mega-platinum fingers aren’t the most eloquent tools in his kit. The mood conjured with co-producer and fellow art-rock traveller Phil Manzanera (Roxy Music) is as ominous as the cover illustration of crows in a gathering storm. Gilmour’s wife Polly Samson draws on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, as you do, in the cryptic lyrics to the title track.

The ponderous “In Any Tongue” is a gruff slog through a conundrum of violence and faith en route to the startling lightning strike of the inevitable killer axe solo. The lapping undulations of “A Boat Lies Waiting” comprise an entirely satisfying marriage of soporific rhythm, vivid images and found sounds. Conversely, the cocktail jazz romance of “The Girl In the Yellow Dress” is the only glaring misstep.

In terms of narrative, the Floyd fan’s standard recourse to full headphone-and-artwork immersion will surely bear profound revelation on repeat play. But still. What is it that’s missing in those three heart-stopping instrumental tracks? Oh that’s right. Nothing. **MICHAEL DWYER**

KEY TRACKS:

“Rattle That Lock”, “A Boat Lies Waiting”, “Beauty”



Sui Zhen

Secretly Susan Remote Control

★★★★

Chameleonic Melbourne artist makes intoxicating debut

Becky Sui Zhen aka Sui Zhen aka DJ Susan expands the realm of the latter alias in her debut LP, constructing an alter ego complete with blonde wig and wacky, candy-hued film clips. Nostalgia and regret colour her offbeat world, with opener “Teenage Years” introducing soundscapes and themes that suggest John Hughes on acid. “Take it All Back” is skewed Cyndi Lauper pop, the snapping synths and Sui Zhen’s anaemic falsetto investing teen-confessional lyrics with surprising poignancy. Ditto the male vocals treated to sound like Cookie Monster on “Walk Without Me”. Closer “Alter Ego” gently releases us from the dream pool with chirping birds and gauzy synths. The urge is to dive back in. **A.R.**



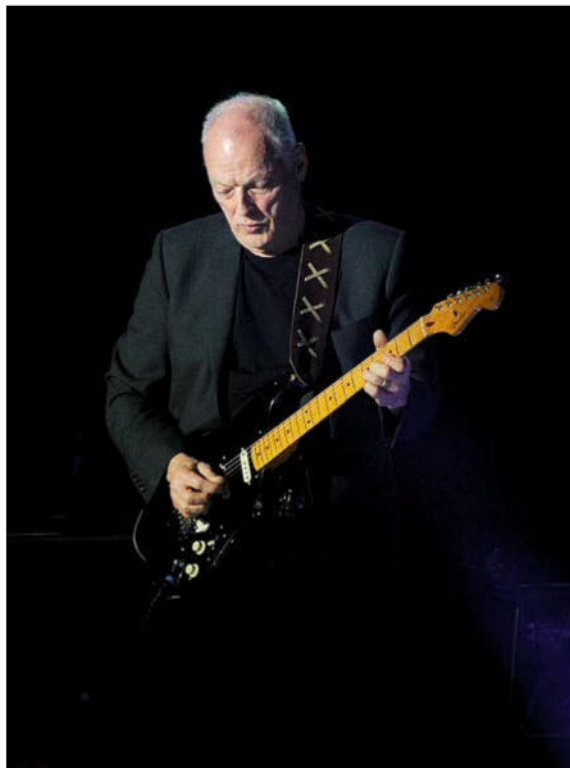
Gold Class

It's You Spunk

★★★★½

Freshly formed quartet tackle post-punk with confidence

While the obvious reference points are Joy Division and the Smiths, trace elements of a variety of Eighties rock bands pepper the debut album from Gold Class, a Melbourne four-piece that formed barely a year ago. What’s missing is a fresh perspective – but with musicianship this assured, *It's You* still engages. Frontman Adam Curley has power and range, and his lyrics – which touch on sex, politics and alienation – are incisive. (Curley is also a fixture of the Melbourne literary scene.) Recorded in just four days, the LP captures a brooding energy – if Curley and co. can address their tendency to let songs run slightly too long, theirs will be a potent formula indeed. **DAN F. STAPLETON**



Rap's King of Pain Drowns His Sorrows

Future plays to his core strengths on a druggy album full of blunt-force hooks

Future

DS2 A1/Freebandz/Epic ★★½



Last year didn't go the way Future planned. The Atlanta croon-rapper's much-ballyhooed, underperforming *Honest* failed to make him the Trap King of Pop, and his relationship with R&B star Ciara fell apart. To regroup, Future went back to the strategy that drove his 2011 come-up: flooding the market with mixtapes, one of which, *Monster*, bore a surprise hit in the woofer-busting "Fuck Up Some Commas". Or as Future tells it on his third studio album, "Tried to make me a pop star and they made a monster."

DS2 maintains some of the ragged edges and raw nerves of his mixtape work (its title makes it, technically, a sequel to a street-classic tape from four years ago). It has little of the far-reaching ambition of *Honest*, but what it lacks in bold strokes, it more than makes up for in consistency

KEY TRACKS: "I Serve the Base", "Groupies"



– 18 tracks, mostly produced by Atlanta trap staples Metro Boomin and/or Southside, all with addictive choruses under an umbrella of cloudy numbness. "I just did a dose of Percocet with some strippers/I just poured this lean in my cup like it's liquor," Future moans on a bonus-track standout. Who can say if his hazy, druggy lyrics are meant to self-medicate or to celebrate? What's clear is that Future has repaved his lane on his own uncompromising terms. CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Various Artists

Muddy Waters 100 Raisin'

★★★

Centennial tribute to a blues legend and rock & roll godfather

Blues vet John Primer played in Muddy Waters' band, and he sounds like it – he has the late giant's slashing guitar tone and slurry vocal phrasing nailed. This handsome CD-book set of Muddy covers is his show. But the guests shine: Derek Trucks adds slither to a badass triple-guitar take on "Still a Fool"; the late Johnny Winter (another veteran Muddy collaborator) does the same on "I'm Ready". Some tracks, like "Got My Mojo Working" (a vocal duet with Shemekia Copeland), smoulder without catching fire. Others, like a drum-looped "Mannish Boy", spark by breaking tradition. All testify to the eternal flame of a master – the original rollin' stone.

WILL HERMES



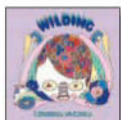
Various Artists

Nina Revisited: A Tribute to Nina Simone Reive/RCA

★★½

Laurn Hill, Mary J. Blige and more on a hit-or-miss covers LP

Nina Simone was a performer first and foremost; her recordings had to translate the drama and intensity of her live presence. This tribute set finds some of her clearest heirs – Laurn Hill, Mary J. Blige, Common – reworking her standards with love, but the results veer sharply between transcendent and tepid. Hill brings power and grace to "Feeling Good" and "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair". Singer-songwriter Alice Smith nearly steals the show with her bewitching "I Put a Spell on You". But it's Simone's own voice on the album's closing number, "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free", that reminds us what, and who, we're missing. BRITTANY SPANOS



Wilding

Molecules to Moons Half a Cow

★★★½

Bedroom psych-pop project comes of age

English expat Justin Wilding Stokes does his native Liverpool proud with the Beatlesque psych-pop he wrangles as Wilding. This lush second LP expands the project's sound beyond his Melbourne bedroom, thanks to so much carnival-esque embellishment. And while the British Invasion still looms large as an influence, "Deep River" channels the ballad-y side of Wilding's recent collaborators Super Furry Animals. Importantly, Wilding has made serious leaps forward as a songwriter since his debut, anchoring his whimsical musings with profound emotion. Songs like "Lost the Moon" are slower and sadder, revealing the dark side of his candy-coated vision. D.W.



Method Man

The Meth Lab Hanz On/Tommy Boy

★★★

Wu-Tang Clan's laid-back star is still chilling after all these years

Back in the Nineties, you didn't need a Ph.D. in Wu-Tang Clan science to get with Method Man, the Staten Island crew's laid-back, approachable, gravel-voiced pop star. Meth has found success as an actor in the 2000s – most famously as Cheese on *The Wire* – but he can still bring the pain. His first album since 2006 is a nostalgic testament to the Shaolin way, full of vintage, gritty New York beats, cameos from pals like Redman (plus Wu brothers Inspectah Deck and Rae-kwon), and a chill, shooting-the-shit vibe: "Zero drama, I'm such a vet/No need for checkin' my cuts, just cut the cheque," Meth rhymes. Hip-hop styles come and go, but Wu-Tang is forever.

JON DOLAN



Chelsea Wolfe

Abyss Sargent House

★★★½

West Coast goth queen finds the heart in an ocean of dark noise

Chelsea Wolfe is an L.A. singer-songwriter with a taste for black veils and other unabashed goth affectations. But her fifth LP shows she's much more than a gimmick. Her voice is more confident than it's ever been, whether it's bathed in industrial noise on the opener, "Carrion Flowers", or backed by ghostly finger-picking on "Survive". When she sings, "My heart is a tomb/My heart is an empty room", on the loud-quiet-loud single "Iron Moon", you can see a thousand teens lip-syncing dramatically in their bedrooms. There's no mistaking the real hurt in these songs – throughout *Abyss*, Wolfe uses her pain as a powerful tool, revealing the beauty underneath it. SOPHIE WEINER



Beach House

Depression Cherry Inertia

★★★★½

Baltimore duo take incremental step forward on album five

If Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally are sometimes evasive about the music they create as Beach House, it's because the language they speak is wholly theirs. It's why every incremental step to us might seem like a giant leap to them. Some might find *Depression Cherry* – save for the shoegaze-y “Sparks” – as a mere extension of the dramatic dream-pop of 2012's *Bloom*. Others might point to the more claustrophobic production, Scally's discordant guitar, the futuristic synths, or Legrand's experimental phrasing as enough evidence of a changing band. Either way it's hard to deny the majesty of “10:37”, or “Days Of Candy”, which opens with a 24-part harmony before reverting to type in its final third.

DARREN LEVIN



The Phoenix Foundation

Give Up Your Dreams Caroline

★★★★½

Wellington tunesmiths still keeping it weird

The Phoenix Foundation have been releasing eccentric albums for more than a decade. Their sixth LP offers as much to absorb as ever, crowding their starry-eyed rock with all manners of vivid layers. That makes for a lot of mood swings, from the darkly frazzled “Jason” to the jazz-prog indulgence on “Silent Orb”. Less successfully, they turn faux-inspirational on the title track and coax romance from the cosmos on “Celestial Bodies”. But their longtime grafting of psychedelic grandeur to snappy muscle yields the delightful single “Bob Lennon John Dylan”, peaking with such head-scratching rhymes as “It's a rhinoplasty in a video mastique”.

DOUG WALLEN



Dr. Dre Goes Back to ‘Compton’

One of hip-hop's all-time greats sums up his legacy on a brilliant, confounding album

Dr. Dre

Compton Aftermath/Interscope

★★★★★



Who in the world has better ears than Andre Young? Throughout his many incarnations, the common thread in Dr. Dre's career has been his ability to hear things differently from everyone else, and his certitude that millions of paying customers will want to hear those things too. Paradoxically, he's been both prolific and patient: It doesn't seem like he's ever stopped working, and yet somehow 16 years have elapsed since his last solo LP.

For much of that time, he's said, he was working on a solo record to follow up 1992's landmark *The Chronic* and 1999's lushly raucous *2001*. The project – which grew increasingly mythical as time passed – consisted of a title, *Detox*, and little else. Now, with scant warning, Dre's solo return is upon us, with the twist that it isn't *Detox* at all. Maybe it's marketing: How could anything meet the wild expectations tied to that name? Or maybe the dream of *Detox* paralysed Dre, and the only way to free himself was to set his sights elsewhere.

So he set them on his past. *Compton* is a companion piece to the new N.W.A biopic, and the album's backward gaze is evident from the intro, where narration from an old TV documentary describes how Dre's California hometown went from black-middle-class idyll to a crime-ravaged “extension of the inner city”. Dre reminisces over past indignities (“Face down on the pavement with the billy clubs...”)

and glories (“... Now it's ‘Fuck Tha Police’ all up in the club”) – but this is no dusty museum tour. *Compton* contains some of his most ambitious production ever, combining the layered bombast and narcotic ooze of his catalogue's peaks with a bunch of bold new tricks. On standouts like “Talk About It” and “Genocide”, Dre and his co-producers manage insane juggling acts between throbbing funk bass, jazz trumpet, extended high-hat solos, acoustic guitars and irresistibly pounding drums. Lyrically, *Compton* is full of an indignation that suggests world-beating success has done little to lessen the vitriol that fuelled Dre back in N.W.A. On “Issues”, co-starring Ice Cube, Dre declares, “Fuck money, that shit could never change me.” The line seems at once boastful and true, for better and worse: The track ends with a jarring fantasy about a woman's murder.

Throughout, Dre's rhyming (aided as always by co-writers) is impressive. He trades his stentorian boom for double-time syncopations and even bursts of song – Eminem and Kendrick Lamar, both of whom cameo, clearly rubbed off on him. The latter in other ways, perhaps: This is Dre's most explicitly political album, featuring lines that evoke police violence, particularly the killings of Michael Brown (“Blood on the cement, black folks grieving”) and Eric Garner (“I can't breathe, I can't breathe”). He's still full of contradictions – on “Animals”, he calls himself a “product of the system, raised on government aid”, but on “Darkside/Gone”, he raps, with palpable disgust, that “anybody complaining about their circumstances lost me, homey”. It adds up to an album by turns confounding and enthralling. It's no *Detox*. It's something realer, and better.

JONAH WEINER

A Murderer In Our Midst?

HBO documentary delves deep into a murder case

By Michael Adams

The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst

Robert Durst

Directed by Andrew Jarecki

★★★★



No matter if you read the news about murder-suspect subject Robert Durst earlier this year, this six-part HBO documentary remains fascinating, not least for the fact that its final episode may prove pivotal in deciding whether he “gets away with it again”.

To rewind: Durst, the prodigal son of a Manhattan property billionaire, is suspected in three murders – that of his first wife, his best friend and an oddball housemate. Bizarrely, Durst, a silver-haired elitist, who’s never been found guilty of anything, voluntarily approached filmmaker Andrew Jarecki to tell his side of the story. What ensued is a series of cat-and-mouse interviews, with the alleged



killer slowly fashioning his own noose. Meanwhile, Jarecki delves into the man’s disturbed background with the clever use of home movies and he illuminates key case moments with artfully shot recreations.

The Jinx is fascinating, binge-worthy viewing. But Durst isn’t the only manipulator on offer. Jarecki lets his subject’s flimsy cover stories stand too long to in-

crease our reasonable doubt, despite them having been discredited by cops almost straight away. Nevertheless, *The Jinx* lays bare a cynical son of privilege who’s allegedly a serial killer, and along the way shows up the massive failures of police, blinded by their prejudices, and prosecutors, blown out of court by the best and most cynical lawyers money could buy in the jaundiced American legal system.



Spy

Melissa McCarthy

Directed by Paul Feig

★★★★

Melissa McCarthy is a CIA drone relegated to ear-piece controller for Jude Law’s suave Bond-type field superhero. But when he’s offed and the agency is compromised, she’s the only unknown operative who can go undercover in Europe. *Spy* is loud, fast and winningly vulgar, like the feminist love-child of 1980s action comedies that had you guffawing at gross gags and gasping at gory violence. McCarthy is a brash blast of sympathetic comic energy, Rose Byrne knowingly puts the arch into arch-villain and Jason Statham takes the piss out of himself winningly. Bring on the franchise.



Entourage

Adrian Grenier

Directed by Doug Ellin

★★½

Oh, yeaah! After eight TV seasons, Vinnie Chase and his boys do it all over again on the big screen. Actually, small screen by the time you read this, which is where this extended episode really belongs anyway. Vinnie’s directing his debut film for Ari (now a studio head!) with money from a Texan vulgarian who wants to steamroller producer E (having a baby with estranged Sloan!) and cut support player Drama (in trouble over a wank tape!) while Turtle drives (and sexes a lady fighter!). It’s bromantic bullshit that’s bright, breezy and too brainless to give serious offence.



Mad Max: Fury Road

Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron

Directed by George Miller

★★★★½

“The future belongs to the mad” – so went the tagline. George Miller delivers with his road-warrior reboot, serving up crazy carnage that’s choreographed with clarity and imagination as rare as it is thrilling in an age when CGI blur-o-vision passes as action. Hardy, Theron and Nicholas Hoult are gritty and real, as is the cult world of chrome-afterlife beliefs, but the flick misses when it hits Max’s backstory or dollops out expository dialogue. Miller has partly corrected this by including a B&W silent cut of the film on the Blu-ray. Give ‘em both a spin.



Better Call Saul: S1

Bob Odenkirk

Created by Vince Gilligan et al

★★★★

Following *Breaking Bad* with spin-off *Better Call Saul* was a big call for creator Vince Gilligan. While Walter White’s fast-talking attorney was a great supporting character, was there really a series in this weasel? The answer’s an emphatic yes as we flash back to poor Jimmy McGill doing his darnedest to be a decent man and good lawyer only for life to push him relentlessly towards becoming Saul Goodman. This is *BB* territory but *BCS* is also its own wonderful thing. Odenkirk is superb, as are Mike McKean as his brother and Jonathan Banks returning as Mike.



GANGSTA'S PARADISE
Straight Outta Compton: "an electrifying piece of hip-hop history".

The Boyz-n-the-Hood

Surprisingly topical N.W.A biopic comes to the big screen in fiery fashion **By Peter Travers**

Straight Outta Compton

O'Shea Jackson Jr., Corey Hawkins, Jason Mitchell

Directed by F. Gary Gray

★★★★★

THIS MOVIE BURNS SO HOT that it's bound to run out of steam. It does. But not so much that you ever want to leave its danger zone. *Straight Outta Compton* is epic, baby, an explosively entertaining hip-hop biopic that raps home truths about race and police brutality as timely now (think Ferguson) as they were during the 1980s in Compton, California. That's where five black teens – known as Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, Eazy-E, DJ Yella and MC Ren – channelled their fury into the beats of N.W.A, short for Niggaz With Attitude. The band didn't invent gangsta rap, but N.W.A were sure as shit there in the delivery room, sparked by near-constant rousting from the LAPD. Director F. Gary Gray, working from a script by Jonathan Herman and Andrea Berloff, doesn't supply halos for

his protagonists. Sex, drugs and the thug life figure prominently. Assign any soft-pedalling to the fact that Dre and Cube, now media moguls, are among the film's producers and that Gray directed Cube videos and his 1995 stoner comedy, *Friday*.

The atmosphere is charged as cinematographer Matthew Libatique creates striking visuals that pull us into the fray. Cube's look-alike son, O'Shea Jackson Jr., does a smashing job playing his dad, blending sensitivity with seething intensity. It's Cube and his buddy DJ Andre "Dr. Dre" Young (a charmingly Corey Hawkins) who persuade drug dealer Eric "Eazy-E" Wright (Jason Mitchell) to finance a label, Ruthless Records. Mitchell's fierce portrayal of the mercurial Eazy (who died of AIDS complications in 1995) is award-calibre, especially when he haltingly, then thrillingly, lays down vocals on "The Boyz-n-the-Hood".

The recording sessions, featuring Neil Brown Jr. and Aldis Hodge in lesser roles as DJ Yella and MC Ren, pack

the vital spark of live performance. But it's Cube who puts N.W.A on the map with his incendiary "Fuck Tha Police". The film's righteous highlight is a Detroit concert where the cops threaten to jail the bandmates and shut the place down if they sing the rap that has demonised N.W.A to Middle America. Of course they sing it. And the crowd roars. The movie is never as potent as it is in that groundbreaking moment, when artists and audiences connect. But credit Gray for tracing the

group's rise and fall with dramatic vigour. The band's white manager, Jerry Heller (Paul Giamatti), instigates a rift that sends Cube on his own and Dre into an unholy alliance with Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight (a very scary R. Marcos Taylor).

Straight Outta Compton plays better when it's outside the box, showing us N.W.A's power and the consequences of abusing it. Would the movie be better if it didn't sidestep the band's misogyny, gay-bashing and malicious infighting? No shit. But what stands is an amazement, an electrifying piece of hip-hop history that speaks urgently to right now.

Ricki and the Flash

Meryl Streep

Directed by Jonathan Demme

★★★½

IT'S A KICK WATCHING Meryl Streep rock out on guitar and vocals in *Ricki and the Flash*. Streep's Ricki Rendazzo dumps her family to play bars with the Flash, a cover band



ROCK & ROLL OUTLAW Streep rocks in *Ricki and the Flash*.

made of bona fide musicians. That's drummer Joe Vitale, keyboardist Bernie Worrell and bassist Rick Rosas, with Rick Springfield on guitar to play lover-boy Greg. Ricki is no star, and director Jonathan Demme, with music in his DNA, offers a heartfelt salute to those who play the underside of rock & roll because, well, they have to. Too bad the rest of the movie, with a script by Diablo Cody, is dime-a-dozen family soap opera. It helps that Kevin Kline excels as Ricki's ex, and Mamie Gummer, Streep's real-life daughter, imbues the fictional version with rare grit and grace. Otherwise, too many wrong notes.

The Diary of a Teenage Girl

Bel Powley, Kristen Wiig

Directed by Marielle Heller

★★★★½

IT BEGINS WITH 15-YEAR-OLD Minnie Goetz exulting, "I just had sex." In *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* – a riveting, resonant first feature from Marielle Heller, with a breakout star performance from Brit actress Bel Powley, 23, as Minnie – you exult along with her. Set in bohemian San Francisco in 1976, the film is based on Phoebe Gloeckner's autobiographical novel published in words and drawings. Heller uses animation to duplicate the effect. We're in Minnie's head, with all its whirling confusions. So much for adult grumbling that *Diary* condones pedophilia because Minnie lost her virginity to an older dude (Alexander Skarsgård, excellent), the lover of her mum (Kristen Wiig). Heller's film is saying that this is what it feels like for a girl. Deal with it. Powley is sensational, expertly blending hilarity and heartbreak. Her scenes with Wiig, sublime in her hard-won gravity, are unique and unforgettable. Just like the movie.

Pixels

Adam Sandler, Peter Dinklage, Josh Gad

Directed by Chris Columbus

★½

ALIENS ATTACK EARTH DISGUISED as characters from 1980s video games. Right, Pac-Man and Donkey Kong want to

kill us. Our only hope lies with arcade geeks now grown up but still immature and played by Adam Sandler, Josh Gad, Peter Dinklage and Kevin James (he's the president). Director Chris Columbus surely hopes that today's teen gamers, hooked on *Halo* and *Call of Duty*, will care about what happened 30 years ago. That's iffy, unless 13-year-olds think it's a scream when Dinklage asks to be part of a sex sandwich with Serena Williams and Martha Stewart, who both do cameos. Yikes! I saw *Pixels* as a 3D metaphor for Hollywood's digital assault on our eyes and brains. Not funny. Just relentless and exhausting.

X) plays Greg, a shy teen who barely navigates the terrors of high school. His toughest assignment comes from home – his mum (Connie Britton) gives him an "or else": Visit Rachel (Olivia Cooke), a classmate he barely knows, who's been diagnosed with leukemia.

No, I haven't tricked you into the weepie hell of *The Fault in Our Stars*. Greg and Rachel don't get it on in a hospital bed. Or anywhere. But they do kick the shit out of each other's false bravado. Greg, an aspiring filmmaker, gets up the guts to show Rachel the short parody films he makes with his friend Earl (RJ Cyler), featuring titles

sistant to Martin Scorsese who whips his camera around as if he were Greg. Which is the point. This film geek's dream of a movie pulls the ground out from under you, but stays smartass to the end. Sweet.

The Wolfpack

Mukunda Angulo

Directed by Crystal Moselle

★★★★

WHAT IF YOUR PARENTS kept you and your six siblings locked up in a public housing project in Manhattan and all you knew of the world came from what you saw in Hollywood movies? That's a loaded question – and filmmaker Crystal Moselle runs with it in this gripping documentary. She doesn't answer all the questions her film raises, but you won't be able to pull your eyes off the screen.

The tenets of the Hare Krishna faith led Peruvian-born musician Oscar Angulo and his American wife Suzanne to keep their six sons and one daughter away from the crime-ridden streets of the Lower East Side. With the exception of a few rare, chaperoned excursions into the outside world, these hothouse flowers – ages 16 to 24 when we meet them – sit in front of a TV devouring Hollywood history like a cinematic wolfpack. The works of Quentin Tarantino, notably *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, figure prominently in their education. As do *GoodFellas*, *Halloween*, *The Dark Knight* and any others that the younger Angulos can turn into plays and put on as family shows. Despite intimations of abuse on the father's part, the children – homeschooled by mum – show enormous charm and adaptability.

Without venturing too far out into spoiler territory, it's fair to say that there's a breakout. That's how Moselle met the Angulos and won access to their home movies (truly amazing stuff). *The Wolfpack* is frustrating in how much it doesn't tell us about the Angulos and the legal tangle that comes with their release. But once you've met these kids, you won't forget them – or the film that puts a hypnotic and haunting spin on movie love.



(1) *Pixels*: one to avoid. (2) Thomas Mann and Olivia Cooke in *Me and Earl*. (3) Wiig, Powley and Skarsgård in *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*.



Me and Earl and the Dying Girl

Thomas Mann, Olivia Cooke, RJ Cyler

Directed by Alfonso Gomez-Rejon

★★★★

IT SOUNDS LIKE THE KIND of tear-jerking swill critics piss on. Ha! The joke's on us. *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* deserves to be the year's sleeper hit. It's that sharply funny, touching and vital. The terrific Thomas Mann (*Project*

like *Pooping Tom*, *A Sockwork Orange* and *Senior Citizen Kane*. She gets it.

So do we. That's because Mann, Cooke and Cyler deserve to be stars of tomorrow, right now. There's not an ounce of Hollywood bull in their performances. In voice-over, Greg tells us that Rachel doesn't die. But can you believe him? Your call. I'm calling good job on the way Jesse Andrews has adapted his novel to the screen. And major props to director Alfonso Gomez-Rejon, a former as-

[Cont. from 63] it's nearly shocking to see the human foibles of the cinematic Dre in *Straight Outta Compton*, as played by relative newcomer Corey Hawkins: In his very first scene, we watch his eyes well with tears when his mum slaps him hard across the face. Later, he sobs after learning of the death of his younger brother, Tyree; the real Dre had to leave the set when they filmed that scene.

"I have social anxiety," says Dre. "I don't like being in the spotlight, so I made a fucking weird career choice." He laughs. "That's the reason for my mystique and why I'm so secluded and why everybody knows nothing about me. I think it added to the character in the movie because people get a chance to see behind the curtain."

Large mixed-media portraits of Jimi Hendrix and Miles Davis hang in the halls of Dre's studio, and the lounge's windows show off a live room and mixing board where, in recent months, actual new beats by Dre have been coming to life. Not long ago, he quietly abandoned his solo album *Detox*, which had been first scheduled for release in 2004, then more or less every year since. "I made a record that wasn't good, and I refused to put it out," Dre says. "I had between 20 and 40 songs for *Detox*, and I just couldn't feel it. Usually I can hear the sequence of an album as I'm going, but I wasn't able to do that. So I really thought I was done being an artist."

But the more time Dre spent on the set of *Straight Outta Compton*, immersed in the past, the more he wanted to get back to the studio. "It just turned something on," he says. In under a year, he recorded *Compton*, a group of songs inspired by the movie that will serve as his final album as a rapper, with guest turns by Cube, Eminem and Kendrick Lamar. "This is absolutely it for me on the microphone," he says.

Dre subsists, at age 50, on a diet of "meat, vegetables and water". He begins most of his days with two to three punishing hours of exercise: 90 minutes of cardio, 30 minutes of abdominal work, the rest of the time lifting weights. But today, he spent his morning getting an MRI of his shoulder. "I had a little hiking accident," says Dre. "I have to get surgery. Just found that out a couple hours ago. So my day has sucked so far." He laughs. "Fuck it, I just gotta deal with it – get it done and get back in here and do my thing."

"I have a high tolerance for pain," he adds. "Both physical and mental." When Dre was 11 years old, he broke his collarbone in a car accident, and didn't mention the injury for six weeks. Out partying one night in 1992, he was shot in both legs (by "a random guy", per the D.O.C.) and went from the hospital to the studio, where he finished mixing *The Chronic* on crutches.

It was the D.O.C. who first befriended Suge Knight and helped persuade Dre to leave N.W.A in '91 to form Death Row Records. Dre was still contracted to Ruthless, so Knight allegedly attempted a *Godfather*-style solution: Wright claimed that lead-pipe-wielding henchmen loomed over him in a late-night meeting as Knight (falsely) informed him that his men had a gun to Heller's head in a nearby van – and threatened Eazy's mum while he was at it. (Knight has denied this account.) Wright signed Dre's release. But he and Heller immediately filed a RICO lawsuit to invalidate the papers. As Jimmy Iovine sought to acquire Death Row for Interscope, he helped negotiate a settlement – and Eazy-E ended up getting royalties on *The Chronic*. ("Dre Day" only meant Eazy's payday," he rapped.)

Dre parted ways with Knight in the mid-Nineties, but he never would quite go away. In what may be the final chapter of their conflict, Knight showed up on

"[Death Row] was a necessary evil," says Dre. "Maybe I needed that element in my life."

the set of a *Straight Outta Compton* commercial, apparently upset at his inclusion in the movie. Instead, he ended up killing a person with his car outside a nearby restaurant, and he is facing murder charges. "It's like, 'Why the fuck does this have to happen?'" says Dre. "'Why the fuck are you coming up here?'" Now somebody's dead, and it's just so fucked up."

Despite it all, Dre considers his time with Knight as "a necessary evil. I don't think I would go back and change anything that's happened in my career, because maybe those things were stepping-stones to where I am now. Maybe I needed that kind of element in my life. The music would've sounded a lot different if I had been around a different group of people. I mean, there were a lot of deaths; it was really fucking serious. But I think something about all of that tension, anger and stupidity helped to fuel the creativity that went into making *The Chronic*, *Doggystyle*, Tha Dogg Pound's album *Dogg Food*, and *All Eyez on Me* for Tupac."

The movie alludes, barely, to the infamous 1991 incident when Dre assaulted TV host Dee Barnes, and doesn't delve into fresh allegations by his then-girlfriend, R&B singer Michel'le, that Dre was abusive – she's accused him of breaking her nose and ribs and blackening her eyes. "I made some fucking horrible mis-

takes in my life," says Dre. "I was young, fucking stupid. I would say all the allegations aren't true – some of them are. Those are some of the things that I would like to take back. It was really fucked up. But I paid for those mistakes, and there's no way in hell that I will ever make another mistake like that again."

Dre is often a heroic figure in the movie: At one point he bravely faces off with a crowd of thugged-out partiers in the halls of Death Row Records. (Asked if that incident actually happened, the D.O.C. laughs and says, "I'm-a let you figure that out.") But Dre's most cinematic moment, a drunken high-speed car chase in his Ferrari that ended with his arrest by what seemed like half of the Los Angeles Police Department, was all too real – and led to a five-month prison stint in 1995 that he calls "the best thing that ever happened to me".

"I came out literally a changed person," he says. "After my brother passed away, I had started boozing. When I got out of jail, I backed off of all of it, left Death Row, got married, just re-evaluated my whole life. My whole plan that I decided on in jail, I put that shit in action."

DR. DRE PUTS ON A BLACK HOODED jacket and walks down the hall to the complex's other studio. It's time to record the latest edition of his radio show, *The Pharmacy*, for Apple's Beats 1, with Cube and *Compton* director Gray as guests, along with regulars including Cube and Dre's old friend DJ Pooh, who co-wrote *Friday*. Cube is wearing a new-looking N.W.A T-shirt, sunglasses and a Dodgers cap.

Everyone is sitting around a circular table, wearing Beats by Dre headphones, surrounded by cameramen. "West Coast Mount Rushmore up in here," says Pooh. The only awkward moment comes when one of the DJs mentions that Dre and Cube used their own money to supplement the budget for a couple of scenes. Dre shakes his head. "Yeah, but we're not going to talk about that," he says.

Eventually, Gray thanks them. "Seriously, you guys, I'm honoured you let me tell the story," he says. "It's a snapshot of American history."

They end the show by having Cube introduce the title track of *Straight Outta Compton*. "A-yo, wassup, it's your boy Ice Cube," he says, in full hype-man mode. "You know who I'm with? My homeboy Dr. Dre. We made history in 1989." He pauses. "Dre, let them know what they about to witness."

Dr. Dre smiles, and just as he did in a recording studio 40 kilometres, 26 years and many selves ago, he leans close to his microphone and intones 11 words – more reverently, this time, as if he's casting a spell: "You are now about to witness the *strength* of street knowledge." 

CHRIS CORNELL

[Cont. from 73] on Alice In Chains' *Sap* EP, where you and Mudhoney's Mark Arm sang backing vocals on the song "Right Turn". What can you remember of that?

It was kind of fun. Those guys were fun, they were fun guys to hang out with. That was a period where Layne was still in really good shape, and he was great in terms of singing in a studio, he'd just get up on the mic and sing and it sounded great every time. It was interesting to see that. He was pretty unbelievable when he was starting out in the early days of Alice. Mark Arm was there, and me and Layne, and I'm not sure if anyone else sang on it, but it was interesting to hear all the voices together. It was one of those cool moments where someone's going out of their way to pull the group of Seattle guys together. I think Seattle was pretty good about that. Johnny Ramone used to tell me that made Seattle stand out, that our scene was different than any other scene in the history of rock music because we were nice to each other. [Laughs] He would talk about the New York punk scene where he was like, "Yeah, we'd do everything we could to fuck up the other bands! And you guys are best friends. I don't understand it!"

Was Johnny a big force in your life?

Yeah, for somebody that had a reputation for being kind of tough to deal with, he was super easy to get to know and was really supportive. He was just a really good friend by every definition. He was one of those guys where there was no bullshit about him, he was completely uncompromising, and not necessarily what you'd expect. There was nothing about his personality or his opinions that were anything other than his, he was the architect of himself, and that was pretty awe inspiring, as well as just the fact that he was a genius in terms of conceiving his own band. He would sometimes give me advice on things I was doing, and no matter whether I agreed with him or not I always took it seriously, because for the most part he was rarely ever wrong about anything.

Is there a piece of advice that really sticks with you to this day?

Yeah, one thing that haunts me every time I'm onstage is, he always said that I need to stand with the microphone stand, and if I move I have to take it with me. He said very few singers can get away with taking the mic off the mic stand and walking around with it. I think Jim Morrison was one of the ones he said could do it, maybe Mick Jagger, but I wasn't one. [Laughs] So every time I walk away from the stand with the microphone I think, Johnny always said this sucked. I should go put it back. It doesn't look right.

Even to this day...

When you're onstage you always think about that stuff. That kind of stuff will haunt you until you stop.

YEMEN

[Cont. from 85] "There is no food distribution in all of Khamir." (A U.N. spokesman says food aid arrived in July.)

As we drove past one group of tents, Berbain tells the driver to stop, and he chats with a woman and asks if her child's itching had subsided yet. When we continued on, he pointed to some stray mutts lurking near the tents. "The dogs are shitting in the fields, and it spreads diseases," he explains. "Their child has ancylostomiasis." He makes a clawing motion against his chest: "It's worms moving under the skin."

As we tour the camp, Berbain is incredulous that the U.N. and the rest of the international humanitarian community are simply allowing people to die of starvation and exposure. "It's amazing. How is it possible that there can be so many IDPs without any response?" he says. "And it's getting worse every day."

International funding for aid has been slow to arrive to Yemen. When the U.N. issued a "flash appeal" for \$274 million in aid in April, the Saudi government immediately pledged the entire amount. As of mid-July, none of the money had been delivered. "When the Saudis committed right off the bat, it made a lot of other donors relax the urgency on their contributions," says an official in charge of an international agency operating in Yemen. "Everyone's wondering if this is what the Saudis intended, or if they simply committed all the money without realising they would not be in charge of where it went."

The biggest constraint on aid, however, remains the Saudi coalition's blockade of Yemen's airports, borders and shipping. Critics in the humanitarian community say it amounts to the collective punishment of an entire nation, and an example of siege warfare against civilian populations that is forbidden under international law. Saudi Arabia has disputed the term "blockade" and refers to the enforcement of a "restricted zone" and "controlled maritime area", whose purpose is to interdict Iranian weapons. While the coalition does allow some approved shipping into the country, the flow of essential goods has been strangled to a trickle. At the end of June, the U.N. estimated that Yemen was getting only 11 per cent of its prewar fuel imports, and the gas shortage had drastically impeded aid delivery across the country.

The U.N. and the rest of the humanitarian community have been desperately pushing for a cease-fire, with little success. The U.N. special envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, has been shuttling back and forth between Sana'a, Riyadh and Geneva, trying to kick-start peace negotiations that no one seems interested in. Both the Houthis and Hadi's government sent teams to Geneva in June for talks, but

nothing came of it. And Ahmed was embarrassed in July when, a day after the announcement that he had brokered a cease-fire for the final week of Ramadan, Saudi jets continued bombing Yemen and the Houthis continued fighting on the ground. The Saudis said that they did not recognise the cease-fire.

DURING MY VISIT, THE QUESTION that I am most frequently asked by Yemenis is, "What do you think will happen to us?"

Yemen's Byzantine, fractious politics seem to confound even experienced observers. And yet, looking at what has already happened in Libya, Iraq and Syria, there seemed to be a precedent. Yemen's war will intensify. Rival sides will splinter into even smaller, more brutal militias. Regional powers will pour fuel on the fire in the pursuit of their own rivalries and domestic agendas, despite the risk of blowback. The international community will stand by helplessly. A massive human tragedy will unfold, shattering millions of lives and sending refugees into teeming camps and to the shores of an unwelcoming West. And a succession of increasingly nihilistic jihadist groups, the war's only winners, will thrive and pose a grave threat to the world.

"The world hasn't learned anything from the Syrian experience," Faqih, the human rights activist, tells me. "What's happening in Yemen is creating an environment that encourages jihadist groups. They have been dreaming of this day."

It may not be too late for Yemen. It may be that the genies of war and sectarian madness can somehow be put back in their bottles. If the U.S. can pressure Saudi Arabia and the coalition into ceasing the bombing and blockade, and in return the Houthis agree to stop their march on the rest of the country; if Saudi Arabia and Iran can be persuaded to leave Yemen out of their rivalry; and all sides within Yemen return to the table at Geneva – then maybe, just maybe, the country has a chance.

Faqih looks out the window. "I think the worst case is coming, without a miracle," he says, and chuckles bitterly. "And there are no miracles."

On the night before Ramadan begins – my last night in Yemen – a series of car bombs go off around Sana'a. Three hit mosques in the city, and another targets the offices of Ansar Allah's political committee. At the scene, I meet Bukhaiti, the Houthi leader I had interviewed, examining a hunk of twisted metal that had been a Hyundai Sonata. The bombings would soon be claimed by ISIS, but Bukhaiti isn't in the mood to make distinctions. "The Saudis, as well as Al Qaeda and ISIS – it's all the same," he says, his face made gaunt by the beam of a flashlight. "We're expecting that there will be more."

Sean Caskey, Last Dinosaurs

The singer-guitarist should think twice before hanging out with Dune Rats again
By Rod Yates

The last fight I had

Me and BC from Dune Rats, we were really drunk and being idiots. He's bigger than me and he had me pinned to the ground and was sitting on top of me and pouring beer on me. He always does this thing where he spits beer on me. I used to play with Dune Rats, and once we were opening for the Hives, and he was like, "Oi Sean, come here! Come closer!" I came closer and he took a big swig of his beer and spat it in my face and then counted the song in [laughs], so I had no choice but to start playing with beer all over my face. He's the cheekiest bastard in the world.

The last time I regretted something I ate

We were in Japan and I ate a raw sea cucumber. It was fucked. It was this grey thing and it looked kind of weird, and I chucked it in my mouth and it was as hard as rubber. As soon as I bit it I almost vomited instantly. It was the most off-putting texture in the world.

The last thing I stole

I've never stolen anything. I've always wanted to steal something but I can't. When you're at Coles it's like, I'd love to steal these avocados instead of pay for them, stuff like that. But the thought of being caught and the shame is too strong.

The last time I was drunk

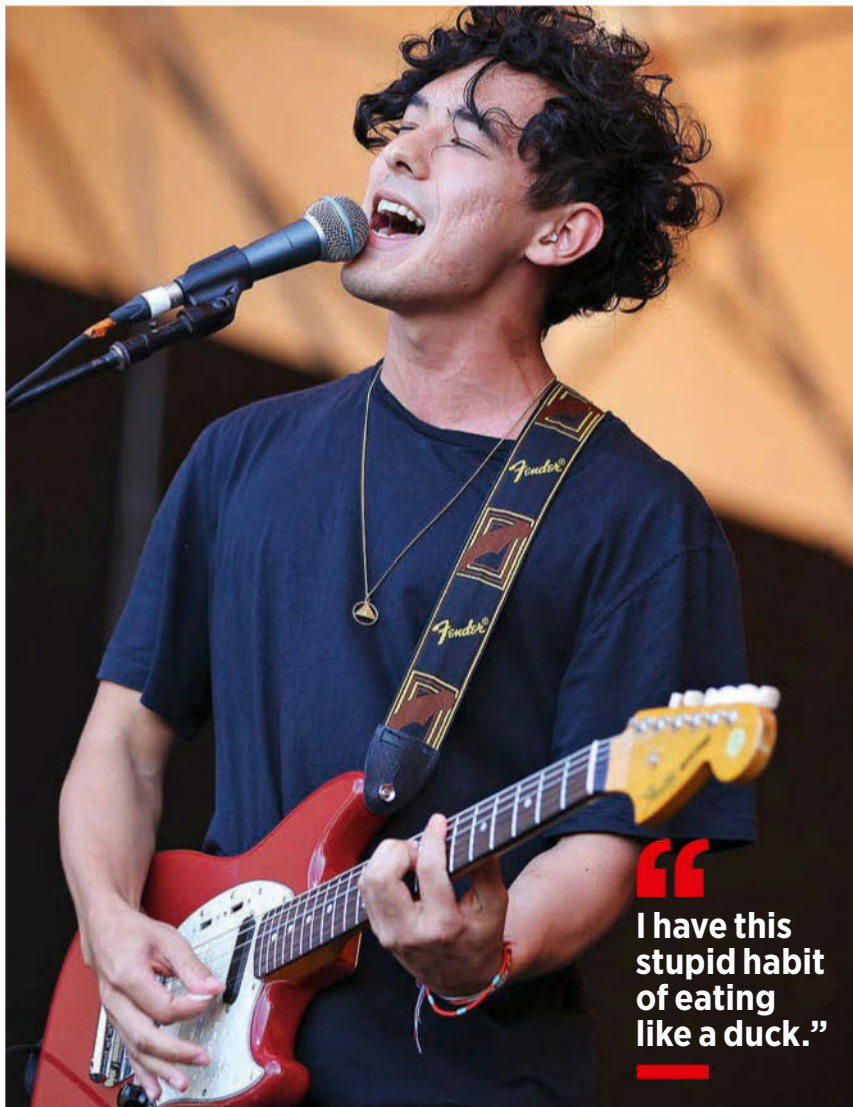
Saturday. Whenever I'm out I do this thing where I think it's an awesome idea to put my card behind the bar as a bar tab. I don't really remember doing it, but I go around and tell everyone my card's behind the bar and just to get drinks on my card, and it's bad.

The last time I was embarrassed

Whenever someone asks me if I'm from Last Dinosaurs. In my head it's instantly a mission, like don't go red, don't go red. Most of the time people just look at me really weird. And it's the same look someone would give you if they wanted to fight you – just that serious look. It's confusing sometimes, especially when it's a buff dog and they don't look like an indie music kind of guy and they're staring at you.

The last time I forgot a lyric

I think it was at Splendour. I do it probably every gig. It gets worse when you start thinking about lyrics,



you start to freak out a bit like, what's the next lyric? So I've always got to switch off and start thinking about what we're going to do later or what we're going to drink or what I'm going to eat, or I think about my shoes, how dirty they are, it's weird. I've played the show so many times, you kind of have to do it.

The last time I heard one of my songs on the radio

I can only get Triple J in certain parts of the city, 'cause when I was driving along once, Danny, who's the singer of Dune Rats, thought it was an awesome idea to try and skitch my car, so he was on a skateboard and he was holding onto my car. He thought it was a good idea to hold onto my aerial, and he

snapped the aerial off instantly. So now I can only listen to Triple J when I'm close to the city. Sometimes I just listen to white noise and every 30 seconds I get three seconds of Triple J. I heard "Apollo" and 50 per cent white noise about a week ago.

The last time I threw up

Three weeks ago. I have this stupid habit of eating like a duck – I just don't chew and I swallow everything, and I get way too full and I have to vomit 'cause I'm in too much pain. I do it all the time.

The last time I said this is the last time

It was about two months ago and I said, "This is the last time I smoke a ciggie." I got sick, and when you have a sore throat, trying to smoke a cigarette does not fly. I had a stuffy nose for ages and every time I tried to smoke it was disgusting, so now I have that sensation or taste every time I think about a cigarette. Do I miss it? No, it was a waste of money, and it stinks.

OUT NOW



Wellness

The Brisbane indie rockers released their second LP, *Wellness*, last month. Their tour kicks off in Brisbane on September 25th.

UPPERCUT
★ DELUXE ★



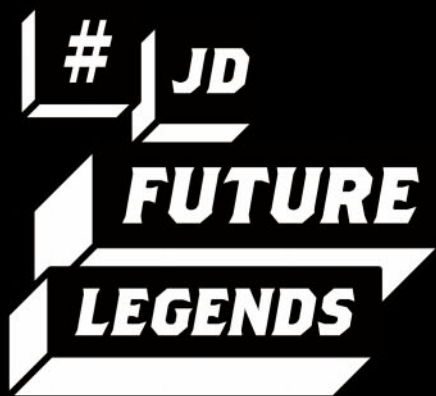
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